

ALEXANDER AND
THREE SMALL PLAYS
BY LORD DUNSANY



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ALEXANDER, AND
THREE SMALL PLAYS

BY LORD DUNSANY

THE GODS OF PEGANA
TIME AND THE GODS
THE SWORD OF WELLERAN
A DREAMER'S TALES
THE BOOK OF WONDER
FIVE PLAYS
FIFTY-ONE TALES
TALES OF WONDER
PLAYS OF GODS AND MEN
TALES OF WAR
UNHAPPY FAR-OFF THINGS
TALES OF THREE HEMISPHERES
THE CHRONICLES OF RODRIGUEZ
IF
PLAYS OF NEAR AND FAR
THE KING OF ELFLAND'S DAUGHTER

Alexander

& Three Small Plays

By
Lord Dunsany



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RESERVE

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ALEXANDER

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

ALEXANDER THE GREAT.

CLITUS, *his friend.*

APOLLO, *in disguise.*

NEARCHOS, *an Admiral.*

PTOLEMY } *The Great Captains of Alexander.*
PERDICCAS }

A PRIEST OF APOLLO.

AN ARCHER.

2ND ARCHER.

PSEUSTES, *flatterer to PTOLEMY.*

SYCOPHANTES, *flatterer to PERDICCAS.*

THE AMBASSADOR OF THE HILL-MEN.

THE AMBASSADOR OF THE NOMADS.

THE AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS.

A RHETORICIAN.

THAIS.

THE QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS.

THE THREE FATES.

Retinues, Herald, Soldiers, Amazons, etc., etc.



ALEXANDER

ACT I

Scene: PERSEPOLIS, and the fallen statue of Xerxes.

Enter ALEXANDER, NEARCHOS, and APOLLO disguised as man.

ALEXANDER: At last, Persepolis.

NEARCHOS: O Alexander, it is Persepolis.

ALEXANDER: And you, O fallen image with the tiara of Persia on your head, who are you?

NEARCHOS: Indeed, I think it is the statue of Xerxes.

ALEXANDER: Xerxes. Indeed, it is a piteous thing to see lie thus one who has held a sceptre.

NEARCHOS: It is only an old statue.

ALEXANDER: But think. It is the statue of great Xerxes, whose feet so many kissed. Now it lies here and no one sets it up.

NEARCHOS: That is a shameful thing. We are his enemies. But that the Persians do not guard their king, though he is dead and in the shadow of war, is a shameful thing.

ALEXANDER: I would set him up.

NEARCHOS: Yet he brought war into our sacred land and filled with weeping all the valleys of Greece.

ALEXANDER: I cannot tell whether I should pass by you and let you lie, for the war you made sometime against the Grecians, or whether I should lift you up, respecting the noble mind and virtues you had.

APOLLO: Do not set it up.

[ALEXANDER *nods and turns from it.*

VOICES OFF: A judgment. A judgment.

[*Enter ARXES. He kneels.*

ALEXANDER: Ah. What is your name?

ARXES: Arxes, your Grace. For ten years in the company of Kylos, a Macedonian soldier, and now a commander of ten.

ALEXANDER: And friend of Alexander, as all good soldiers are. What would you have of me?

ARXES: A judgment, your Grace. We have a prisoner here taken yesterday in the battle in the monstrous act of aiming at Alexander—an archer who had come most nigh your Grace, most nigh, and aiming surely.

[PRISONER *is dragged on.*

ALEXANDER: I thank you for your zeal, my zealous Arxes. Are there any among the prisoners the gods gave us who did not aim at Alexander?

[*A manacled PRISONER rushes forward.*

MANACLED PRISONER: Your most high Grace, I did not aim at you, I did not aim at you. I did not aim at your god-like Majesty.

ALEXANDER: Why not?

MANACLED PRISONER: Your most high Grace, I durst not.

ALEXANDER: You served Darius ill. Let him be flogged, my Arxes; but clemently and with the single whip. (*He turns to the other Archer.*) But to you, since it pleased the gods to give me Persia, I stand on behalf of Darius, and in Darius's name I give you the golden chain, that a good soldier may not miss his reward.

[ALEXANDER *walks away*. PRISONER *remains kneeling*.]

ARXES (*to PRISONER, scratching his head*): Well, Prisoner, it seems I'm an old fool.

[*Exeunt*.]

2ND SOLDIER (*pointing with open hand and extended arm*): What must we do with these, O Alexander?

ALEXANDER: To these we are what the high gods are to us.

2ND SOLDIER: We smite them then.

ALEXANDER: No. When the gods have smitten the world with thunder and the crops can endure no more, how often do they astonish us with rainbows. The gods are clement.

2ND SOLDIER: We must not punish them?

ALEXANDER: Let Darius punish those that ran away.
But these that fought us to the last let
them go home and see their wives again.

CAPTIVES: Oh-h Alexander!

ALEXANDER: Tell the Persians.

THAIS (*drunk*): Burn Persepolis, Alexander. Burn
Persepolis. Bid us burn Persepolis.

ALEXANDER: You are drunken, Thais, and it is not
yet evening.

THAIS: Do not taunt me with being drunken when
you are the cause, Alexander.

ALEXANDER: How am I the cause of your drunken-
ness, good Thais?

THAIS: It was to celebrate your victory.

ALEXANDER: Farewell my merry Thais. I go to
consult with my captains.

CLITUS: My lovely Thais. (*Approaches her.*)

THAIS (*to APOLLO*): Old man, dance with me.

[*APOLLO walks straight on, but looks at
her terribly.*

(*Recoiling.*) Don't look at me with
your eyes like that!

[*Exeunt ALEXANDER, NEARCHOS,
APOLLO.*

THAIS: Do you love me, Clitus?

CLITUS: Yes, Thais, surely I love you.

THAIS: Do you always love me, Clitus?

CLITUS: Yes, I always love you.

THAIS: Ptolemy did not use to love me always. He only loved me when I was sober.

CLITUS: I love you always.

THAIS: If you love me, Clitus, why then you will do a little thing for me.

CLITUS: A little thing, Thais?

THAIS: Indeed, but a little thing.

CLITUS: I will do what you will.

THAIS (*clutching him*): That old man, Clitus! That terrible old man! Send him away, Clitus. I—I—I do not like the old man.

CLITUS: Nay, but he hath the ear of Alexander. He is indeed as his shadow. In all his battles he has been at his elbow, in the council hall he is there. I cannot send him away.

THAIS: You know that Alexander would give his life for you, Clitus, or even all his kingdoms. Has he refused you aught since you were boys and ran together on the hills of Greece?

CLITUS: No. He is generous. But this is not reasonable. Why do you not like the old man, Thais? He ever advises Alexander wisely.

THAIS: I do not like him.

CLITUS: But he does not harm you.

THAIS: He looks at me.

CLITUS: We all look at you, Thais.

THAIS: He looks at me. And when he looks at me
he sees all the things that I have ever
done and all the things I will do.

CLITUS: I am sure they were all most good, the things
you have done.

THAIS: They were evil things.

CLITUS: No, no, Thais.

THAIS: He looks at me and he sees them.

CLITUS: But you bade him dance with you.

THAIS: I was drunken.

CLITUS: Nay, you are sober, Thais.

THAIS: He looked at me, and I am terribly sober, and
full of a great thirst.

CLITUS: I fear lest an evil fall upon our army if I
should do this thing.

THAIS: What evil should happen?

CLITUS: He might go away and never return again.

THAIS: Why should he not?

CLITUS: He has been so long a time with Alexander.
He has been in our councils since we
first left Greece, and no one knows his
name.

THAIS: Doth not Alexander know it?

CLITUS: He hath never spoken it, Thais, even to me.

THAIS: There is something strange about that,
mark you, there is something strange
about that.

CLITUS: It is a business I would have no hand in.

THAIS: If you do not send him away you do not love
me, and I will surely die and forget the
evil things that I have done.

CLITUS: No, no, Thais, I love you and you must
never die. What would become of us
if you left us, Thais. But I cannot——

THAIS: I will not have him look at me with his eyes.
I would sooner die and forget the things
I have done. Why does he look at me?

CLITUS: But, Thais.

THAIS: I tell you I will die. I will die, Clitus. He
shall not look at me.

CLITUS: But, Thais, be calm; do not cry out but
hear me——

THAIS: I will die, die, die. Farewell, Clitus, I will
drown myself——

CLITUS: No, but you must not.

THAIS: I will drown myself down in a huge quiet
lake, full of soft weeds, and he shall not
look at me.

CLITUS: No, Thais!

THAIS: Farewell!

CLITUS: Thais, I will send him away.

THAIS: You will send him away, Clitus?

CLITUS: I will send the old man away. I will ask Alexander.

THAIS: You promise me.

CLITUS: I promise. I will ask Alexander.

[THAIS *draws his sword.*

THAIS: Promise me by your sword that the old man shall go.

CLITUS: He shall go, Thais. (*He touches the blade that THAIS holds towards him.*)

THAIS: My Clitus.

CLITUS: But we must hear no more of lovely Thais dying. That would be terrible. What should we do?

THAIS: No, Clitus.

CLITUS: I would fain not ask so much of Alexander. Yet I have promised.

THAIS: You have promised.

[*Enter ALEXANDER.*

ALEXANDER: Clitus. My dear friend, Clitus.

CLITUS: Alexander.

ALEXANDER: The gods have given us a noble victory.

CLITUS: Indeed, you took it for yourself with your own good sword, Alexander.

ALEXANDER: No, Clitus: give praise unto the gods alone. What is man with his boasts who lies so soon like that? (*Pointing at Xerxes.*)

CLITUS: But all men praise you as equal unto the gods.

ALEXANDER: Praise the gods only.

CLITUS: O Alexander, would you still grant me anything I desired?

ALEXANDER: O Clitus, for what cause do you ask me this? Have I grown miserly? Have I forgot our friendship? That is an unkind question, Clitus.

CLITUS: Indeed I know you. Were you not generous you were not Alexander. But it is a hard boon that I desire and one difficult to grant. Therefore I asked the question.

ALEXANDER: Why ask a little thing of Alexander? And is it hard for me to grant a boon to my dear friend?

CLITUS: O Alexander, I ask not for myself, but there are those that murmur against that old man who is ever in your councils. I pray you dismiss him and lead us henceforth alone.

ALEXANDER: I would that you had asked me some other boon.

THAIS: You have sworn, Clitus.

CLITUS: I would that I might ask no boon of you, Alexander. And yet I ask for this. And surely alone and without councillors you could govern the world.

ALEXANDER: What man can stand alone?

CLITUS: Surely you, Alexander.

ALEXANDER: Praise no man. Listen, Clitus (ALEXANDER *sits down on some fallen pillar or stone*), and I will tell you what I have told to none; a thing that none have guessed. It was on the hills in Hellas when I was young. I was not quite sixteen. You know the road that comes from Lacedaemon, the way the heralds take that go to Delphi?

CLITUS: Yes, I remember.

ALEXANDER: I was hunting once along the hills beside it with my two hounds Hermes and Hades—do you remember them?

CLITUS: I well remember them.

ALEXANDER: We had not found a wolf all day and it was nearing evening, when I saw an old man coming down the road looking to the left and to the right as he went, as one who searched for something. He came quite near me. I said: "For what are you searching, O old man?" He said: "I search for one who shall be beautiful and brave and strong." He said I was beautiful. I said I was brave. So he said: "Look me in the eyes." And I looked long in them, though he had terrible eyes. He said I had great bravery, but what of my strength. I said: "Test it, O old man," and he held out his little

finger and bade me bend it. It was an hour to sunset. I wrestled with the old man's little finger, and just at sunset I bent it a little downwards. He said I had terrible strength. And then he promised me, on the road that runs to Delphi, that because I was beautiful and brave and strong he would go with me always as long as I should wish, and tell me at all times, however slight the occasion, which of two courses it were best to follow.

CLITUS: And this is that strange old man?

ALEXANDER: Even he. And he hath counselled me with wisdom at all times.

CLITUS: Yet sometimes his schemes err, surely.

ALEXANDER: No, Clitus.

CLITUS: But all men err a little, however great their wisdom.

ALEXANDER: O Clitus, this old man is the god Apollo.

CLITUS: The god Apollo!

THAIS: You swore by your sword, Clitus.

CLITUS: The god Apollo.

ALEXANDER: Even he, Clitus.

THAIS: By your sword.

CLITUS: It will be said years hence of Alexander:
"He was but a piece upon the board
of one of the games of Apollo which he

plays with Destiny or some other god, as it were a game of chess which the Egyptians play."

ALEXANDER: We are all, Clitus, pieces in that game.

CLITUS: Not Alexander.

ALEXANDER: Yes, Clitus, I no less than all men else.

CLITUS: Yet you love glory, Alexander.

ALEXANDER: Yes, I love glory. It is the light of a man. It is to a man what its radiance is to a lantern. It proceeds out of him. Without it he were worthless.

CLITUS: O Alexander, you have conquered kings. This other men have done. But none has stepped before from the destined scheme to play themselves as the Egyptians play. This were to conquer gods.

ALEXANDER: This is not talk for men. It is enough for us to conquer kings.

CLITUS: No, Alexander. Apollo conquers kings. It is an idle game that he plays with Destiny.

ALEXANDER: True, Clitus. I had forgotten. We do nothing.

CLITUS: In the old stories that the ancients tell did a man ever gain by the gifts of the gods? Have they not ever sought some crafty end, giving to man in usury?

ALEXANDER: Apollo gave me victories and good counsel.

CLITUS: The gods feared Alexander. And so he came fawning and full of guile to ingratiate himself and make you his servant.

ALEXANDER: And why not, Clitus? We must serve the gods.

CLITUS: The gods fear you.

ALEXANDER: Apollo gives me victories.

CLITUS: He gives you little victories. World-girdling Apollo fears for his dominion. If you went on without him you would conquer the world. Why! Men would worship you in torrid India and even forget Apollo.

ALEXANDER: Can we do so much, Clitus?

CLITUS: Let us test it.

ALEXANDER: That were daring.

CLITUS: The world shall wonder at you when it forgets the gods.

ALEXANDER: Yet would I not do it but for you, Clitus.

CLITUS: And indeed I would not ask it but for——

[ALEXANDER goes out signing to
APOLLO, who follows.

(*With violent remorse.*) The thing is done. Thais! The thing is done! I have thwarted Destiny! I have hindered the gods!

THAIS: Calm yourself, Clitus. I bade you do it.

CLITUS: You! What is the airy Thais that the gods should blame her or the world remember? No, it is I. I have altered the fate of the world.

THAIS: No, Clitus. Rest your mind. The gods gave the fate of the world to a woman, Clitus.

CLITUS. To a woman? What woman, Thais?

THAIS: Any woman. The gods care not. It is the way of the gods.

CLITUS: My little Thais, you speak of things you cannot understand.

[*Enter DANCERS.*

A LEADER OF THE DANCE: The dull old man is dismissed. We shall have revels now.

THAIS (*starting up*): He is dismissed? You say he is dismissed?

LEADER OF THE DANCE: Alexander has sent him away.

THAIS: And the old man, has he left him?

LEADER OF THE DANCE: Yes. He has put his cloak over his face and is going away angry.

THAIS (*kissing him*): Dear dancer, how sweet your tidings!

LEADER OF THE DANCE: Dance with me, Thais. (*They dance and all the others drift by behind them.*) And what shall we do for our little Thais now?

THAIS: I think I would have them burn Persepolis.

LEADER OF THE DANCE: Persepolis! But Thais, think what a city!

THAIS: Say rather of Greece "what a country"! And was it not from these walls that Xerxes came to make a war upon the holy land.

LEADER OF THE DANCE: Yes, long ago.

THAIS: He vexed the fields of Hellas. (*She spits at the fallen image.*) Bah, Xerxes, lie there. Paráxonēs, I have seen many days . . .

LEADER OF THE DANCE: Nay, Thais, that rosy blush is less than twenty summers.

THAIS: It is younger than that, Paráxonēs. I painted it this morning.

LEADER OF THE DANCE: Nay now, Thais, surely—

THAIS: I have seen many days and most were evil, yet once I was a child in the holy land and I remember all the songs of Hellas. Yes, I remember our country. They say I was beautiful then, Paráxonēs.

LEADER OF THE DANCE: Indeed, you are very beautiful, our Thais.

THAIS: Nay, but I was in Hellas, our holy land. None said so but they looked and were very mute and went their way in silence. I remember that child, that Thais (*getting louder*), and that country; and they that vex it, I will burn their bones, and spit on their images that are fallen

low, and burn their city and high memorials down—(*quieter*) for the sake of Hellas.

LEADER OF THE DANCE: Why Thais, you are angry.

THAIS: No, I am thirsty. Give me some wine, Paráxonēs.

LEADER OF THE DANCE: Wine. Wine for our Thais.

VOICES: Wine. Wine for Thais.

[THAIS *drinks herself stupid. Trumpets sound.*

DANCERS: Hark, the great captains come.

ANOTHER: That's the great captains.

[*Enter PTOLEMY and PERDICCAS, great captains of ALEXANDER.*

PERDICCAS: Thank you, my good Sycophantes. I am afraid you are a sad flatterer. Yet it was well said.

SYCOPHANTES: I flatter no man. But to the demigods I give that reverence that is their due.

PERDICCAS: My friend! My friend! No, no. You say too much. I am only poor Perdiccas. (*He sighs.*)

[PSEUSTES *kneels and offers a cup to* PTOLEMY.

PTOLEMY: My good Pseustes, you must not kneel to me.

PSEUSTES: I kneel, O Ptolemy, because the sooth-sayer said . . .

PTOLEMY: Hush, Pseustes, you must not speak treason.

PSEUSTES: He said you should be king of Greece and Rome.

PTOLEMY: Hush, hush, Pseustes, this is treason.

PSEUSTES: And that the moon shall be named moon no longer but be known for ever as Ptolemy in your honour.

PTOLEMY: He said too much.

PSEUSTES: And that you shall one day have the command of an army with no superior above you.

PTOLEMY (*sighs*): These soothsayers sometimes fail to foretell truly.

PSEUSTES: Alas that one so wise and truthful as Ptolemy should so err and say what is false.

PTOLEMY: What!

PSEUSTES: I weep for the ignorance of Ptolemy in this matter.

PTOLEMY: My ignorance?

PSEUSTES: I am no flatterer but say the plain blunt truth. In this matter Ptolemy, so wise, is ignorant.

THAIS: Ptolemy is a fool; and Perdiccas is a fool.

PERDICCAS: What!

PTOLEMY: And what is Thais?

THAIS: Thais, poor fool, knows her folly, being wiser than Ptolemy.

PERDICCAS: Heed her not, Ptolemy, she's drunk.

THAIS: . . . and being wiser than Perdiccas.

CLITUS: Thais! Your folly will undo Alexander!
Repent of it and . . .

THAIS: That's the folly of the gods. I told you it
was the gods. They are always throw-
ing the world away to some woman. I
cannot stop the gods.

PERDICCAS: Let her be. She's drunk.

CLITUS: Ah, I loved Thais and I have ruined the
world.

[APOLLO crosses stage. They taunt him.]

*[Exit the rabble after APOLLO. The
FLATTERERS remain.]*

PSEUSTES: So he is gone.

SYCOPHANTES: I will follow after Perdiccas. He
lately promised me a cup of gold.

PSEUSTES: Of gold did you say?

SYCOPHANTES: I think it was to be of gold, perhaps
it was silver.

PSEUSTES: Perdiccas gives no gold.

SYCOPHANTES: No, it was to be silver, I remember
now.

PSEUSTES: I will stay here.

SYCOPHANTES: And does not Ptolemy give you pieces
of silver?

PSEUSTES: Alexander gives naught but gold when
he makes gifts.

SYCOPHANTES: Alexander!

PSEUSTES: And why not, now?

SYCOPHANTES: Will Alexander hear us?

PSEUSTES: Not much at first. But we shall say little at first.

SYCOPHANTES: And then?

PSEUSTES: Is not the old man gone?

SYCOPHANTES: I will *not* follow after Perdiccas.

PSEUSTES: Let Ptolemy find dogs for his silver pieces.

SYCOPHANTES: And what will you say when you praise Alexander?

PSEUSTES: You shall praise him. I will not speak till you have your cup of gold.

SYCOPHANTES: O generous Pseustes.

PSEUSTES: This is a man worth praising.

SYCOPHANTES: Yet none before have praised him unrebuked.

PSEUSTES: Never before was he free of that old man's counsel. We will find him like a child that is run from school.

SYCOPHANTES: Shall we run and throw one more stone at the queer old man.

PSEUSTES: No, it is going to thunder. (*Flash—another.*) Look! How the lightning flashes along the hills. (*A Flash.*)

SYCOPHANTES: I pray Zeus that it may not strike the army.

PSEUSTES: No. It is going from us from hill to hill. See how it strikes Akneion. That was Shaknos. There's the heath blazing upon Mount Ilaunos, and there on Ebnoth. What a fearful storm!

SYCOPHANTES: I am glad it is going from us. That peal was like—footsteps.

PSEUSTES: It *was* like footsteps.

SYCOPHANTES (*frightened*): How terrible are the gods,

PSEUSTES: Zeus, what a storm! And how sudden.

SYCOPHANTES: I thought I saw a shape upon the mountains, a large shape going westwards.

PSEUSTES: It was, I think, but smoke. Yet I am frightened.

SYCOPHANTES: Is it not further off?

PSEUSTES: Yes, it is further. (*More thunder.*)

SYCOPHANTES: That time it was fainter.

PSEUSTES: Yes, I am easier now.

SYCOPHANTES: The old man went that way.

PSEUSTES: Yes, he was going that way by the hills; he will have a fearful journey.

SYCOPHANTES: Well, he is gone now and the great storm with him. We are well rid of both.

PSEUSTES: Here's Alexander.

[*Enter ALEXANDER.*]

ALEXANDER: Well friends, what do you here?

SYCOPHANTES: We three were sheltering here.

ALEXANDER: Why, where's the third?

SYCOPHANTES: Indeed you know him not, O Alexander. The third was Fear. He came to us from the storm.

ALEXANDER (*looking afraid*): Speak not of the storm. I forbid you to speak of it. There are things men should not speak of.

SYCOPHANTES: Indeed, Alexander, such a storm . . .

ALEXANDER: No, my friend, we will speak of other things.

SYCOPHANTES: Then we are silent. For of one thing only all men speak to-day, and of this we may not speak lest we be thought to praise you and I that flatter no man be called a flatterer.

ALEXANDER: A soldier needs no praises. What do you speak of?

SYCOPHANTES: Of your valour as a soldier we do not speak nor of your captain's skill, but all men say a new star shines on Asia, in Alexander's wisdom, which is such as none have known in the old time even.

ALEXANDER: No, no, no, this is flattery.

SYCOPHANTES: Alexander, none have said this of me ever and gone unrebuked, and I have ever been an honest man. Now that the wisest say I am but a flatterer I may hold up my head no more.

ALEXANDER: I spoke hastily. Forget it.

SYCOPHANTES: Never shall I forget it. I have been called a base thing not by some fool but by the wisest man that Asia knows. Never shall I hold up my head again.

ALEXANDER: Come, come, I spoke in haste.

SYCOPHANTES: No, though he speak in haste Alexander does not err, and yet I knew not I was a flatterer. I did no more than say what all men know, and knew not that the truth was flattery, being unskilled altogether in the flatterer's hateful ways.

ALEXANDER: Yes, yes, you are no flatterer.

SYCOPHANTES: No, for I speak nothing but the blunt truth always, after saying what the others durst not, and now I tell this plain tale that none have told you, knowing their danger if they speak of these things; but I speak of it because it is right that you should know. All Asia is terror-stricken, wondering at your wisdom, and none dare tell you this. Wherever you set foot throughout all Asia it is known to all that men will abandon their kings and be ruled by you for the sake of your famous wisdom, and none but I dare tell you.

ALEXANDER: I fear you flatter me.

SYCOPHANTES: I readily pay the penalty. Slay me for what I have said, because none else

dare tell you. Slay me but take my message. Asia awaits you.

ALEXANDER (*giving gold ornament*): There, there, we shall not slay you.

SYCOPHANTES: Thank you, great son of Philip.

PSEUSTES: He is not the son of Philip.

ALEXANDER: What!

PSEUSTES: Son of God, it has long been said by all, no *man* could do what you have accomplished.

[*Bewildered silence falls on all, even on ALEXANDER.*]

ALEXANDER: You say my mother played King Philip false.

PSEUSTES: Even for sacred Zeus.

ALEXANDER: Who says this?

PSEUSTES: Son of God, all men say it.

[*The FLATTERERS steal away one by one until ALEXANDER is left alone still deep in thought.*]

ALEXANDER (*solus*): True. No man has done what I have done. And yet. . . . Again Zeus is the father of all, but that is mere. . . . And it were politic to be divine. (*He calls for PRIEST. PRIEST enters.*) You have heard what men are saying.

PRIEST: They say many things, O Alexander. They say . . .

ALEXANDER: They say that Zeus begat me. (*The Priest is silent.*) And what say you?

PRIEST: In all the affairs of men, O Alexander, there is doubt. Of their going hence there is doubt whither they go, and a greater doubt there is of their coming hither, in what manner they came.

ALEXANDER: But what say you who are wise in all these things?

PRIEST: Humility, O Alexander, is dearer to Zeus than wisdom. Shall I presume to speak of his goings forth or to know things that are hidden?

ALEXANDER: A crafty answer.

PRIEST: O Alexander, I am a simple man and unaccustomed to have speech with kings.

ALEXANDER: Answer me straightly. Give me no subtleties. Am I the son of Zeus?

PRIEST: You are the son of Zeus, the father of all.

ALEXANDER: You simple man, you have the cunning of Woman.

PRIEST: Pardon the ignorance of a poor plain man.

ALEXANDER (*rising*): Your ignorance shall be instructed. Learn then that I am the son of Zeus, as many have said, and not the son of Philip, or of any mortal man. Learn that I am immortal like my father, whom Chronos begat in the old time: and in proof of this I will burn Persepolis, the city of such kings.

PRIEST: O Alexander, you would not burn Persepolis, so holy from ancient days. That is a frightful thought.

ALEXANDER: It is a frightful thought, and *I* have thought it. No mortal man durst think it.

THAIS (*who has sidled on*): It was my thought, Alexander.

ALEXANDER: You err. I alone have thought it.

THAIS: It was my thought. I was drunk and I cried out burn Persepolis. It was my thought, Alexander.

ALEXANDER: Peace woman! What do you know of the thoughts of the sons of god? (*He looks at her and she goes withering away.*) Torch-bearers! Torch-bearers! (*Enter TORCH-BEARERS.*) Burn Persepolis.

[*Exeunt TORCH-BEARERS; they re-appear at back, passing decoratively. ALEXANDER picks up a torch. Exit ALEXANDER. A glare is seen and increases. Persepolis burns.*]

PRIEST (*kneeling down, facing the burning*): O gods of Persepolis, gods of Persepolis: I know ye cannot avail against Alexander: yet make one little curse before you burn. One little curse. Let him one day be even as this (*pointing at fallen Xerxes*).

[*The gods blaze.*]

ACT II. SCENE I

Scene: Beyond Persia.

ALEXANDER *is no longer a simple soldier but is dressed in Persian silks.*

Enter NEARCHOS.

NEARCHOS: You sent for me, Alexander.

ALEXANDER: I looked last night upon the silver stars.

NEARCHOS: Upon the stars, Alexander?

ALEXANDER: I am no longer what I was, Nearchos.

NEARCHOS: No, Alexander.

ALEXANDER: There was a time when every battle won, when every new horizon of the earth was joy and triumph. Now I have
seen the stars.

NEARCHOS: The stars, Alexander?

ALEXANDER: I have looked long on them. They are so many: great multitudes that rise and wheel and set and know not Alexander.

NEARCHOS: They are only stars.

ALEXANDER: I cared not once: now I am different. I am greater; but not happier, Nearchos.

NEARCHOS: Happiness goes with the Greek dress and the Greek ways.

ALEXANDER: So it was once.

NEARCHOS: And now?

ALEXANDER: Now the world mocks me with all its hills and peoples, saying "We are not

conquered." But I *will* conquer them. I will take the world to the uttermost: all its lands shall be mine, and I will look with ease on the contemptuous stars. Therefore go you, Nearchos, with all your ships into the farthest gulfs. See India; mark it well. Search out the seas, even to Oceanus, beyond which there is nothing. Mark Æthiopia; learn the lie of it. Look for that kingdom that men call Cathay, that garden country with its fabulous wall. If there be such a land bring word of it. And to all kingdoms to whose shores you sail say "Alexander comes."

NEARCHOS: I go, Alexander. Wear Persian silks, dismiss wise councillors, turn even from the gods; only be Alexander, and you have my fealty, my sword, and my bended knee.

ALEXANDER: I know, Nearchos.

NEARCHOS: I'll toil for you, I'll sail the seas of the world, I'll fight for you. The grey hairs have come upon my head, but I'll work on. When they send us such a man as Alexander what else would we do—though he dress like a Persian and forget the Greeks.

ALEXANDER: He will come no more whom I have sent away: he is gone, Nearchos. And sometimes now I forget what is due to

the Greeks. Yet will I remember; I do not need his counsel, I will remember. I will send for Clitus. *There* is a Greek, *there* is a Macedonian. I will send for Clitus. Why, I have not seen Clitus for many days. I will see Clitus and so remember again the ways of Greece. Ho! Send hither Clitus, Ptolemy too and Perdiccas. (*To NEARCHOS.*) I will be with Greeks and recover that austere spirit that Hellas gave me.

[*Exit* SENTRY.]

NEARCHOS: Right or wrong, Greek dress or Persian, my sword is for Alexander.

ALEXANDER: Nearchos, if I were a husbandman with a small cottage on the hills of Greece, with a field to be tilled with labour, would you have worked with me?

NEARCHOS: Yes, Alexander.

ALEXANDER (*sighs*): I have chosen the world instead, with Oceanus for my boundary. Haply a small field with a rustic hedge, and such a friend as you, were happier. Well, I have chosen and the dice are cast, the gods have read the numbers. Farewell, Nearchos.

NEARCHOS: Farewell, my liege lord.

[*Exit* NEARCHOS.]

ALEXANDER: So he is gone. Be humbled, Alexander, that have, beyond the deserts of any

man, so loyal a servant. Yet am I not the son of a sacred Zeus? No, I will not be humbled, that were not fitting.

[*Enter PTOLEMY and PERDICCAS.*]

Ptolemy, greeting. Greeting, Perdiccas.

PTOLEMY and PERDICCAS: Greeting, Alexander.

ALEXANDER: Well, Ptolemy, the world is still unconquered. But I have sent Nearchos down its coasts to search it out. Then we will conquer it all.

PERDICCAS: All? 'Tis a large world, Alexander.

ALEXANDER: A large world, yes. And full of little men. Have larger dreams, Perdiccas. The world's small enough. There's room for many of them in my dreams.

PTOLEMY: Many *worlds*?

ALEXANDER: Yes, *many* worlds. And were there more, why, I would conquer more. Such is your leader. But let us plan. We are so far into the land of Persia that the next kingdom for me should be India.

PTOLEMY (*to* PERDICCAS): India.

ALEXANDER: Well, we'll take India. Then we'll await Nearchos, and hear if there be a kingdom of Cathay and learn the lie of Æthiopia, whether Oceanus cuts off its coast, as the gods ordain for every other land, or whether she lifts her terrible, barren head out to the stars.

PTOLEMY: How shall Nearchos find you?

ALEXANDER: How find Alexander? Be guided by bloody fields, by blazing towns and broken armaments, or ask the way of wandering exiled kings. Find Alexander!

[Enter CLITUS with THAIS.
Why, Clitus!

CLITUS: Hail!

ALEXANDER: My Clitus. I have not seen you these many days.

CLITUS: There have been so many Persians all about you that one could not push through the throng to come to you.

ALEXANDER: Ah, Clitus, I will put off the Persian dress. I will be Greek again. (*Casts his wreath away.*) But since he left me, he of whom we spake, I have been something different. Ah, Clitus, you advised me ill that day we burnt Persepolis.

CLITUS (*gravely*): I advised you ill.

ALEXANDER: Yet I'll be Greek again.

CLITUS: Pray that old man that he return, Alexander.

THAIS: No, Clitus.

ALEXANDER: No, he is gone, and will not come again; nor is it fitting; I will not bend my will for gods or men.

CLITUS: Ah, we were terribly mistaken.

ALEXANDER: Say not we were mistaken, my dear Clitus, for you forget that I being the son of Zeus have not the power to err.

CLITUS: Alexander the son of Zeus!

ALEXANDER: Even so my Clitus, and none the less
your very dearest friend though you are
mortal.

CLITUS: The son of Zeus. I never heard anything so
ridiculous.

ALEXANDER: *Clitus!!* Clitus, you are my friend, and
your foolish words are forgiven as soon
as uttered. Why, I forget them. Yet
consider, Clitus; many a man had died
for saying what you said. I know you
did not mean it. But we of the holy line
bear insults badly.

CLITUS: Insults. I did not insult you. You talked
nonsense and I said so. You are talk-
ing nonsense now. I do not mind you
talking it, Alexander.

THAIS: Be silent, Clitus.

ALEXANDER: Clitus, no other man on earth had said
so much and lived.

CLITUS: I will not be silent, Thais. Alexander says
he is the son of Zeus.

PERDICCAS: He is the undoubted son of sacred Zeus.

CLITUS: And now Perdiccas is talking nonsense,
Thais.

PTOLEMY: Clitus, none doubt he is the son of Zeus.

CLITUS: And now Ptolemy.

THAIS: Be silent, fool.

ALEXANDER: Clitus, you shall die.

[THAIS runs up to ALEXANDER and abstracts his sword. Exit THAIS.]

THAIS (*as she goes, to PERDICCAS and PTOLEMY*): Lead him away.

ALEXANDER: Give me my sword!

CLITUS: Do not be silly, Alexander. I only said that Ptolemy talked nonsense when he called you the son of Zeus. You're the son of Philip of Macedon. Isn't that enough?

ALEXANDER: Sound the alarm. Sound the alarm, I say. This is treason.

[SENTRY at first disobeys, then raises his bugle. Enter THAIS.]

THAIS: Do not sound it. There'll be an uproar in the camp if you touch that. Lead him out, he's crazy.

[PERDICCAS and PTOLEMY pull CLITUS out.]

CLITUS (*going*): Crazy? I only said . . . (*Exit*.)

[PERDICCAS and PTOLEMY return to soothe ALEXANDER; re-enter CLITUS by another door.]

CLITUS: Thais, I'm not crazy. Why do you say I'm crazy?

ALEXANDER: Give me a sword. You die for this treason, Clitus.

THAIS: There are no swords here. He is mad, Alexander. He's mad. We all know you're the son of Zeus.

CLITUS: I'm not mad. I say his mother is an honest woman, he says . . .

[ALEXANDER, *snatching a javelin suddenly from a soldier who enters, rushes towards CLITUS. CLITUS stands still, then he realizes and flies. ALEXANDER pursues him off. PERDICCAS and PTOLEMY follow to doorway, but are too late. Re-enter ALEXANDER.*

ALEXANDER: I have killed him. I've killed Clitus. Clitus, I did not mean it! I . . . Clitus, meet me when you come from school by the big oak tree on the hill and we'll go down the valley hunting again together. . . . It cannot be that he is dead. For if he's dead we cannot hunt again, and he and I are going hunting this evening when Clitus comes from school.

PERDICCAS (*to PTOLEMY*): Yes, he's quite dead.

ALEXANDER: "Dead," someone says. Not Clitus. But he's not dead in my dreams. Let us see. Come not near me: I will think. Which are real, my dreams or this hard world? I see this place. Now there are tears in my eyes, and I see Clitus hunting on the hills upon a summer's evening. Surely he is not dead.

PTOLEMY: Clitus is quite dead.

ALEXANDER: Dead?!

PTOLEMY: We cannot pull the javelin from his body.

ALEXANDER: The javelin? Ah! Where is it?

[*He rushes to exit and is stopped by*
PTOLEMY, PERDICCAS, and THAIS.

THEY: No.

ALEXANDER (*returning to centre, sitting down, weeping*):
They will not let me die. They will not
let me die. It is only a little thing I
would ask of them, and I am Alexander.
Thais, dear Thais, give me a little thing,
give me a little dagger, a small jewelled
dagger, I ask no more than this of you,
Thais.

[THAIS *weeps and does not hear.*

PTOLEMY: No, Alexander.

ALEXANDER: Thais, Thais.

PTOLEMY: She cannot hear you. She loved Clitus.

[ALEXANDER *sinks to the floor.*

(*To PERDICCAS.*) I do not think he will
seek to kill himself now. Yet we will
take the javelin from the body, and let
no weapon be brought near him.

PERDICCAS: Will this fit pass away?

PTOLEMY: I think it will pass now.

PERDICCAS: What a frightful spirit he has. It is
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swift as a bird, strong as a lion; now to do this, now to do that. (ALEXANDER *moans*.) He is crying out against it now. What can a man do against his spirit?

PTOLEMY: Poor Clitus.

PERDICCAS: Ah. Yet we are somewhat nearer Alexander, you and I, now he's dead.

PTOLEMY: Why, that may be.

PERDICCAS: And something greater, Ptolemy.

PTOLEMY: Yet I would have him back if there were a path back. (THAIS *mutters*.) What does she say?

THAIS: Oh—h.

PTOLEMY: Take comfort, Thais. Weep not my pretty Thais. You must not spoil your beautiful face with tears.

THAIS: I loved Clitus.

PTOLEMY: We all love you, Thais, and your little childish ways. Do not weep.

THAIS: I loved Clitus. I have had many lovers. I loved Clitus last. None more shall love me. I will paint my face no more. I am an old, old woman.

PERDICCAS (*to* PTOLEMY): She does not know what she is saying.

[THAIS *goes off sobbing*.

PTOLEMY (*to* PERDICCAS): Come, leave him awhile.
We will set an unarmed guard about
this place so that he do not slay himself.
Come hence.

[*Exeunt.*]

[ALEXANDER *is left alone prostrate.*]

CURTAIN

(*Three days elapse.*)

ACT II. SCENE II

ALEXANDER *lies on the floor moaning of* CLITUS.

A PHYSICIAN: Speak to him of his country.

ATTENDANT: He raves and none may speak with him.

PHYSICIAN: Give him to drink of the wine of some Macedonian vineyard growing by hills he knew.

ATTENDANT: He will not drink, nor eat, nor sleep, but only moans for Clitus.

PHYSICIAN: What is that?

ATTENDANT: It is the dancing women that we sent for to dance to him, it may be that when he sees the women dance . . .

PHYSICIAN: Yes. Let us come away. (*Exeunt.*)

[*Enter the DANCING WOMEN, they dance past him.*]

ALEXANDER: Ah. You have not heard that Clitus is dead. (*They go on dancing.*) I tell you Clitus is dead. (*They go on dancing.*) What! You would dance when he is dead? When sweet young Clitus is dead and none should dance again? Away! Away! Away! (*They flee.*)

[*Enter ATTENDANT.*]

ATTENDANT: Alexander. Alexander. There are come across the desert all manner of terrible men from the barbarous coun-

tries. We bade them stop, but they would not heed us and came on, each tribe of barbarians racing against the other. (ALEXANDER *takes no heed.*) They are all here, now; from Araby, from the mountains, and I know not from where else. (ALEXANDER *lies silent.*) Terrible men, Alexander, have come. They are here now.

[*Exit in despair.*]

[*Enter the AMBASSADOR OF THE NOMADS. He has horned headgear.*]

AMBASSADOR OF NOMADS: I am first. Where's Alexander. (*He walks up to the prostrate ALEXANDER.*) Where's Alexander?

ALEXANDER: What?

AMBASSADOR OF NOMADS: Quick. I must see him. (*Looks over shoulder.*) Where's Alexander?

ALEXANDER: Why, I'm Alexander. (*Sits up, leaning on one arm.*)

[AMBASSADOR OF NOMADS *takes a step back and prostrates himself.* ALEXANDER *still looking at him.* The retinue of the Nomads *prostrate themselves also.*]

AMBASSADOR OF NOMADS: O Alexander, we be the Nomad people, and if you will deign to make a treaty with us we will give you the quarter of our herds, as well as a

thousand of our huge-headed spears, and cunning bowmen who shall fight for you, and a hundred of those swift, notable horses that we get from the plains; only make a treaty with us.

ALEXANDER: Have you killed your friend? Have you ever slain your companion?

AMBASSADOR OF NOMADS: Why no. Not my friend.

ALEXANDER: Then I will make no treaty with you nor speak with you, for there is only one thing that I wish to speak of.

AMBASSADOR OF NOMADS: If you will make a treaty, O Alexander, we will give you *half* our herds, as well as our huge-headed spears, the bowmen and the swift horses.

ALEXANDER: I will not speak of treaties when Clitus is dead. For he is lying in that chamber now with a white coverlet upon his body, and he is dead. We must not speak of any other thing.

AMBASSADOR OF NOMADS (*stepping back*): Alexander! Is this Alexander? Is it Alexander whom the nations tremble at? Alexander!

ALEXANDER: Yes, it is I. I killed Clitus.

[*Enter the* AMBASSADOR OF THE HILL-MEN *with retinue. They have huge sheepskins and great knives, etc.*

[*Enter hastily the* AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS *with retinue, each man has several swords and long knives in his belt.*

AMBASSADOR OF NOMADS (*scornfully*): Make your treaty with Alexander. (*He gathers his men with a sign of his hand. Exeunt all the Nomads.*)

[AMBASSADOR OF THE HILL-MEN *when he sees it is ALEXANDER kneels down with all his men.*

AMBASSADOR OF HILL-MEN: O Alexander, make with *us* a treaty. Make your treaty with us, Alexander. None can bring you such tribute as we can bring, for it is all secret what the hills possess. It is all secret, none knows what it is, none knows the place of it. But listen, Alexander, you do not hear me. I speak of the secret of the hills. We will bring you amethysts from the precipices, which we get with the long rope of Asjar; there is no way to get them but by dangling down, and no other rope so long; we keep it at Asjar in our brazen house. But hear me, Alexander. We will give you the gold that the cataract brings down, old Hill-Thunder our cataract, that no man has ever seen but the men of the hills. The gold comes down at morning and flattens with the fall, and the crags that it comes from are unknown to man, even the mountaineers. And opals also from the high hills of snow. But—you do not hear me. I speak of the secret of the holy hills—and you do not hear.

ALEXANDER: Have you killed your friend? Your dearest friend, have you slain him?

AMBASSADOR OF HILL-MEN: Why—that is not the custom of the hill-men.

ALEXANDER: Then I will not speak with you.

AMBASSADOR OF HILL-MEN: Is it not beautiful to speak of the hills?

ALEXANDER: I say I will not.

AMBASSADOR OF HILL-MEN (*walking slowly away backwards*): You should have had our treasure and known the ancient secret of the hills.

ALEXANDER: I will not speak with you.

AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS: O Alexander, we also would make a treaty.

ALEXANDER: I make no treaties. It is not a time for treaties. For what purpose should you need a treaty? I will not speak of it.

AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS: Hear me, Alexander.

ALEXANDER: Have you slain your companion that I should speak with you, and have you killed your friend?

AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS: Yes, Alexander.

ALEXANDER (*rising*): You have slain your friend?

AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS (*departing*): Yes, Alexander.

ALEXANDER: Stay! Stay! I would speak with you. Do not leave me. Yes, we will speak together. We will speak long, you and

I. (*ALEXANDER rises, goes up to AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS, and puts his arm round his shoulders.*) So you slew your friend.

AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS: Why. Yes, Alexander.

ALEXANDER: Are we not in the dark place, you and I? Verily in the dark midmost place of the world's sorrows. Was it long ago? But what has time to do with it, our sorrow is a twin immortal cypress, it neither fades nor grows. For me the gods planted it three days ago.

AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS: Ah, doubtless.

ALEXANDER: What? But you do not speak. I, too, am silent sometimes for many hours, sometimes I rave. I know not which is better. Is it better, think you, to rave?

AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS: Perhaps the council chamber and the making of treaties best turns one's mind away.

ALEXANDER: We must not speak of treaties, you and I. They do not know our sorrow, they that speak of treaties. They do not know. But let us speak of Clitus.

AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS: Yes, yes, we will speak of Clitus first, and after that then . . .

ALEXANDER: Why yes, of your dear friend. But we will speak of him first. Indeed I will not be selfish in my sorrow. We are the world's most chosen, you and I. The two to whom the gods have given the first of sorrows. What was his name?

AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS: His name? Ah yes,
my friend's: his name was Nasrāeel.

ALEXANDER: And what befell? You quarrelled?

AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS: Why yes, we quarrelled.

ALEXANDER: And upon what matter?

AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS: Upon the matter of . . .
it was at a banquet.

ALEXANDER: Yes? yes?

AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS: We had drunk wine. I
said a certain woman of Ind was beautiful. Maharb said a certain woman of
Persia was lovelier.

ALEXANDER: Maharb?

AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS: Yes. My friend.

ALEXANDER: But your friend was Nasrāeel.

AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS: I called him Maharb.

ALEXANDER: Yes. Yes. And then?

AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS: Why then I slew him.

ALEXANDER: You slew him, and with what weapon?

AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS: Why, with my sword.

ALEXANDER: I will tell you a dreadful thing. I will
tell you for we are the twins of sorrow.
I killed Clitus with a horrible javelin.

AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS: Indeed, O Alexander,
we are the twins of sorrow. Let us,
therefore, make a treaty, you and I,
that we may proclaim our brotherhood.

ALEXANDER: Let us rather speak of the dreadful things we have done, and how we became the heirs of an equal doom. Tell me how Nasrāeel looked when he was dead. Did he speak as you killed him?

AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS: No, he did not speak.

ALEXANDER: Clitus tried to speak. I think he would have spoken.

AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS: Nasrāeel did not speak.

ALEXANDER: Tell me more.

AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS: We buried Nasrāeel.

ALEXANDER: And then? Used you to sleep? Or did you lie awake with terrible dreams? How many nights is it before sleep comes?

AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS: Why, I do not remember. I busied myself about the affairs of my country. I made treaties with other countries and so I forgot my grief.

ALEXANDER: You forgot?

AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS: Yes, I made treaties: there is no other thing that so soon drowns remembrance.

ALEXANDER: Is that so?

AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS: Yes, treaties——

ALEXANDER: But we must not speak of treaties. Come, I will tell you of Clitus. Clitus and I were as two hounds chasing one hare together, so together we sought

glory. We were as fire and light, song and echo. Clitus and I were of the one country; knew the same hills; held the same valleys and small rivers holy, remembered the same old tales. O Arab, I killed Clitus, and he is dead.

AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS: It is most sad, and we will mourn for Clitus when you deign to grant the treaty that we seek.

ALEXANDER: Clitus was young, Clitus was fair and nimble, Clitus was ever . . . but I perceive you do not hear me.

AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS: Indeed I hear you . . . but this treaty.

ALEXANDER: No more of treaties. Is not Clitus dead?

AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS (*with a high motion of his hand to his men*): It is useless. Come.

[*Exeunt.*]

[ALEXANDER *sinks to the floor again.*
Enter with retinue the QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: I come to challenge to combat Alexander.

ALEXANDER (*looking up from the floor*): Why, I am Alexander.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: You Alexander that overthrew Darius?

ALEXANDER: I am Alexander that killed Clitus.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS (*saluting with her sword*): I am a Queen and leader of Amazons, and am come to challenge to combat Alexander.

ALEXANDER: Alas for Clitus.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: Is it seemly that one so well spoken of as you are by those that walk upon the fields of war should lie thus without his sword.

ALEXANDER: Clitus is dead.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: Will you do combat with me or make battle against the Amazons? (ALEXANDER *bursts into tears*.) But a grief has come upon you and you are in trouble. (*She runs up to him as he writhes on to his back. She goes on one knee and takes his head on her lap.*) Rest your head, it aches. (*She puts her hand on his forehead.*) Trouble is terrible, but all things pass like the water from the hills. It will not always be like this. Rest your head. What was it? What was it?

ALEXANDER: I killed Clitus.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: And Clitus was your friend, a dear friend, and you were angry? Yes, that is terrible. But you will be better soon. That is always so when it is violent at first. It will pass away, all things pass.

ALEXANDER: Clitus is dead.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: Do not weep for Clitus. There are no troubles in death. You must not weep for Clitus, it is only life that has troubles. I am often in trouble, but we must bear with life as well as we may. Only the dead are safe.

ALEXANDER: Have you killed your companion, have you ever slain your sister?

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: I had a dear friend once when we were children. We quarrelled once and I slapped her in the face. It was many years ago and we were children. But year in, year out, whenever the Spring comes round (it was in Spring that I did it), when the oleander buds break into blossom, I remember this and weep, though it is so long since and we were children.

ALEXANDER: You have never slain a man.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: Do not stir. Rest your head. I have slain many men. Yet I weep whenever the oleander blossoms.

ALEXANDER: Comfort me not unless you bring back Clitus.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: Have you slept?

ALEXANDER: Not for three nights. (*A pause, she strokes his forehead.*) Comfort me not who cannot bring back Clitus. (*A pause, still stroking his head.*) How can I forget, how can I forget for ever? Tell me how I may forget Clitus.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: Life is violent and full of sorrow. We must tire it, and when it is over we must rest.

ALEXANDER: How may I tire life?

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: By the practice of the art.

ALEXANDER: What art should I practise? Ah! but I cannot forget. Clitus, Clitus, Clitus, I may not forget you.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: There is only one art that is worthy of life.

ALEXANDER: What art can weary life into forgetfulness and bring rest soon?

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: The lovely art of war.

ALEXANDER: Ah! (*A pause.*) I am very weary.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: Rest, Alexander. (*He falls asleep, head still on her knee. Somebody enters, she raises her hand for silence. He tip-toes off to others in the door.*)

ONE: He sleeps.

ANOTHER: Then he will live.

ANOTHER: He sleeps.

[*Exeunt softly. ALEXANDER and the QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS remain quite still. Suddenly he starts up half sitting, half reclining on one arm. She rises.*]

ALEXANDER: Ha. I have dreamed of India. Ah, Clitus is dead. But you should have seen India as I dreamed it. There were

elephants with rams upon their foreheads, cavalry with white horses, kings with scimitars, camels laden with turquoises from the mountains, and kingdoms to be had for the taking.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: Go and take those kingdoms, Alexander, there is no good art but war.

ALEXANDER: What a wife for Alexander.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: I am a soldier and give my hand to no man.

ALEXANDER: Then—you will never have children to comfort when they weep.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: Oh yes, for strange and difficult are the chances of war. Some day there may come a conqueror?

ALEXANDER: Do you fear you will ever be conquered?

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: It will come one day from the left flank. The flanks are ever most vulnerable. My picked women march on the right flank.

ALEXANDER: And you would wed a conqueror?

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: That is as it pleases the victor.

ALEXANDER: It would be a terrible thing for one so like the dawn over the plains, or like the little winds that run free in the morning, to endure servitude.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: What matter how marriage comes, marriage that brings obedience and all the cares of a house.

ALEXANDER: And you would forget the noble art of war?

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: I would forget it all, and the bright raids in the morning.

ALEXANDER: I will be that conqueror.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: That is as must be decided on some cornfield as yet untrodden by soldiers, or on hungry plains of grass that have not yet tasted blood.

ALEXANDER: What do they name you?

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: They name me Rhododactilos.

ALEXANDER: A fair name and a terrible. I will put aside my grief and conquer the world even to India. Thence I will bring the nations against your gates for war, O Rhododactilos.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: It is a noble art.

ALEXANDER: How well was it said of the sword that it is the founder of cities.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: It was well said.

ALEXANDER: And yet of what avail is it if the sword overturn them again? Can your wisdom answer me this hard question?

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: It is no hard question to one that is versed in the art of war, for

man takes after his mother and is even like to the earth, which needs must be broken and turned, and broken and turned again, or ever it bring to birth the golden corn. So man and his cities must be broken with war to bring forth his wisdom and strength. The sword is the ploughshare of man, that he grow not corrupt in his cities.

ALEXANDER: Well said, O Queen Rhododactilos. We will make a mighty warfare, you and I, on my way from the ends of the world.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: Even so, Alexander.

ALEXANDER: O Queen, I would not that you came to harm. Fight not against my men of Macedon; but, sitting aloof in your palace, send forth your Captains.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: It was ever my wont to lead my Amazons.

ALEXANDER: No, no, Queen; go not forth. My men of Macedon are swift and mighty.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: I ever lead my Amazons.

ALEXANDER: But if you are killed, my poor Queen Rhododactilos?

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: Many women die. But if you are killed, Alexander?

ALEXANDER: I am immortal.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: Indeed some have said so.

ALEXANDER: You do not believe then that I am immortal?

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: No, Alexander, *I have seen the immortals*. I saw them once upon my hills at evening. I know the calm look of their marble faces. Their cold eyes chilled the evening. Among them are never tears and never laughter.

ALEXANDER: Let Mars decide. I may be long in India, and at the end of the world where the earth runs down to Oceanus; but one day I shall come with my Macedonians, though you had twenty armies.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: My Amazons shall watch for you in the passes.

ALEXANDER: We shall meet then over your broken ramparts.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: We shall meet face to face on fields of war.

ALEXANDER: Never looked lovers to so strange a meeting.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: I love no man.

ALEXANDER: If you could have loved a man, might it have been Alexander?

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: How can I say who am free, or how know who have never been conquered?

ALEXANDER: But how if I should conquer you with my men of Macedon behind me?

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: If I were vanquished there
were no more to say.

ALEXANDER: Men say that I was magnanimous at
Issus.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: I have no need of mag-
nanimity. Let me have the favour of
God and the fair chances of war.

ALEXANDER: To what god do you look?

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: I know no god but Mars.
(*She goes to the door.*)

ALEXANDER: Farewell till we meet in battle, Queen
of the Amazons.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: Farewell, Alexander.

ALEXANDER: Farewell, wonderful soldier.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: O Alexander, when you
make war on me go up against me with
horses.

ALEXANDER: Why with horses?

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: Because we—because my
women have seldom stood against
horses. Against infantry we are in-
vincible.

ALEXANDER: O Rhododactilos.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: Farewell, Alexander.

ALEXANDER: I will come with elephants out of India
and most swift horses.

[*Exit* QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS.]

ALEXANDER: What a mother for heroes. . . . But Clitus is dead. . . . What was it he said? He said my father was Philip of Macedon. And so I killed him. Such is man. Such is man, and I had thought to be greater than the gods. O Clitus, Apollo hath taken you thus terribly, using my own mad hands. (*He looks at his hands.*)

[*Enter the* PRIEST OF APOLLO.

PRIEST OF APOLLO: Be humbled now and turn to the god again, and seek peace of Apollo.

ALEXANDER: Humbled? Apollo? No! He hath done this to me; let him do even more. But what god or beast or man shall humble Alexander? Nay, I will overrun his India and sack that torrid Asia that he loves.

PRIEST OF APOLLO: What can a man avail against a god?

ALEXANDER: Let us put it to the test. Let him save India.

PRIEST OF APOLLO: It is written that he is terrible over India.

ALEXANDER: Then to India.

[*HERALDS take up the cry. The trumpets of the legions are heard one by one.*

CURTAIN

ACT III. SCENE I

*A ruined temple in Gedrosia on the way back from India.
There are carven gods against the wall. The roof is gone.*

ALEXANDER (*wreathed with roses*): Have we not
rioted?

A RHETORICIAN: I have for my theme the virtues of
Alexander.

SYCOPHANTES: What nobler theme could any man
desire?

RHETORICIAN: It is neither seemly nor is it the wish
of Alexander himself that others should
speak while I orate.

SYCOPHANTES: I but praised your theme.

RHETORICIAN: It is not a theme for a man to speak
of idly. My theme is the virtues . . .

SYCOPHANTES: I did not speak idly of . . .

RHETORICIAN: Hush—The virtues of Alexander.
Of his valour and magnanimity I have
spoken in my oration delivered in Per-
sepolis, but of his temperance what
bard shall sing, or what man praise it
enough? It was the wonder of India.
He was frugal even among wines so
rare that the Indian dynasties that
hoarded them had bought them drop by
drop with royal pearls. His strength is
such that they durst not go up against

him with horses, but came with Behemoth, the elephant, and were utterly cast down, mountainous beast and man, by the power of Alexander.

He endured famine in deserts day after day and night-long hunger, and marches with only a little maize, and was not gluttonous in the granaries of kings, nor was he tempted with their age-old wine that they had bought drop by drop with royal pearls.

A YOUNG PUPIL (*plucking him by the sleeve*): Master, you have said that already.

RHETORICIAN: Ah yes, the pearls. Do not interrupt me. Should not such great forbearance be recorded more than twice? . . . with royal pearls. I say that he has endured hunger and been untempted with wine and has met Behemoth in the day of his anger face to face, even Behemoth the horrible monster of Asia, and has overcome him in war. He has come up like a lion out of Greece, and like the sun from the hills of Macedon. Kings have gone down before him and their crowns rolled away, and more kings came up against him; and always they brought Behemoth, who danced in his anger, and yet they could not prevail.

He is out upon the world like the North wind in winter, like Boreas in his youth; he is down upon Asia like the

avalanche from the high hills of snow.
Not all the maidens of Asia—a moment
—In the warmth of the looks and long-
ing of the fairest maidens of Asia his
austere chastity was like those crags of
ice that glitter and will not melt for any
sun, floating as some have said in boreal
seas.

ALEXANDER: This man wearies me. Somebody sing
me a song about a goat.

DYONIS: I have a song about the god Pan himself,
but it is not fit to be sung before so many.

ALEXANDER: What concerns Pan is fit to be sung
before all mankind. Indeed his doings
are most honourable. I shall bid my
writers put together a book concerning
them, I shall call it the Deeds of Pan.

DYONIS: O Pan, O Pan, O Pan—O Pan—O Pan—
O Pan, O Pan, O—(*He thinks deeply.*
Somebody suggests the word Pan.) The
very word (*musically*) O Pan.

ALEXANDER: Is there any more of this pleasant song?

DYONIS: O Alexander, there is much more, but I have
forgotten it with many other beautiful
things that happened long, long ago.
When I think of the beautiful things I
have forgotten I—weep. (*He weeps.*)

ALEXANDER (*rising and making obeisance to him*): I
make obeisance unto the god Bacchus
who is indeed most manifest in you.

DYONIS: I am not worthy of this, your Grace, not worthy, not worthy.

ALEXANDER: I have noticed that the god Baccus does not always choose the most worthy persons in whom to make himself manifest. Indeed, I have known worthy men unto whom Bacchus has never appeared at all, whereby those worthy men suffered much loss.

DYONIS: Without doubt, Alexander.

ALEXANDER: Bacchus is somewhat like a dog, he lies down in dirty places. He seems quite happy now to be rolling in thy nasty wits.

[COURTIERS *laugh at* DYONIS.]

DYONIS: Indeed, but I am sober.

ALEXANDER: Sober, did anyone say sober? Search out and see whether anyone present be sober. Due reverence shall be paid to-day to Bacchus who has made himself manifest in the person of this Dyonis. I will have none sober when the god Bacchus deigns thus to manifest himself. Honour to Bacchus. If any man be found sober, let him be brought before me.

ALL: Honour to Bacchus.

TWO MEN (*pointing each a finger at the other with intense gravity, solemnly*): Thou art sober.
(*They fall forward very, very slowly into*

each other's arms, thence to the ground, and move no more for the remainder of the act.

[A man goes up to the stone statue of some god against the wall—loq.]

I see two men that seem sober here.

ALEXANDER: Bring them before me that I may try their heresy. *(The man tries to.)* Why do you not bring before me for judgment those heretics from the high grace of Bacchus?

DYONIS: O Alexander, one of them is so stubborn, dull and stony a heretic, that he stands like a whole phalanx, and the other is so nimble and airy that he eludes my grasp and may in no wise be handled.

PTOLEMY: I cannot clearly see, your Grace, but I think he has hold of a god.

ALEXANDER: Verily a god has hold of him, even most puissant Bacchus.

DYONIS *(struggling with the idol and clutching at its imagined duplicate)*: I can bring neither of them.

ALEXANDER: It is indeed a most perplexing matter, nor can I discern its meaning, that when drunk we see two objects, whereas there be only one.

PERDICCAS: Your Grace, it is indeed most wonderful.

PTOLEMY: There is no answer to it among men.

ALEXANDER: We will go into this matter thoroughly and sift it. I, Alexander, would know the wherefor of it. Bring hither Apoctes to me.

COURTIERS: Apoctes, O Apoctes. (*He comes.*)

ALEXANDER: O Apoctes, most wise among the philosophers that honour Macedon, most wise, and yet I perceive thou art not drunk—there is no wisdom in not paying honour to Bacchus, so excellent a god—most wise, as I was saying, among the Greeks, and therefore most wise among the philosophers of the world—which I have conquered—What did I wish to say to Apoctes?

PERDICCAS: O Alexander, thou didst wish to know the truth concerning this wonderful matter of seeing two men when there be only one.

ALEXANDER: Indeed, it was so. A nice and difficult matter and one well worthy the wisdom of a philosopher. O Apoctes, most wise Apoctes, tell me concerning this difficult matter, even the matter of—of—

PREDICCAS: Of seeing as two what is verily only one.

ALEXANDER: Of seeing two when there is verily only one as this most learned Perdiccas has so well said, himself well honouring Bacchus.

APOCTES: O Alexander, this matter that thou hast set before me is one well worthy of the

researches of so wise a king. Know then, O Alexander, that there be gods and gods, each having his proper wonders and manifestations, the wonders of one god being otherwise than the wonders of another and manifested in their several different manners. There be the wonders and manifestations of Jupiter, of whom I durst not speak in the presence of his undoubted son, there be again the wonders and manifestations of Venus (*cheers from all present and from ALEXANDER*) and these on the other hand be of the wonders of Bacchus, that a man beholding one thing thinketh it two. And the cause and reason of it is this, that Bacchus increaseth as it were the joy and pleasure of all things, giving to the humble man a crown, and to the king two crowns. And in the like manner it is so with the sight of the eyes, that when there is but one thing to the uninspired yet it becometh two to the adorer of Bacchus, and so also again in like manner . . .

ALEXANDER: Crown him with roses. (*With great acclamation he is crowned with roses and led away, men bowing and strewing roses before him.*) We have spoken much of folly and of wisdom—indeed they are one and the same—but we have spoken naught of the glory of Alexander. I will outriot

Bacchus. Bring me the jewelled cups of Indian kings, I will have no silver goblets. (*He casts one down.*) Bring me the heavy, huge, Carmanian orchids. Bring women with their diverse Asian silks and dark, dark hair so full of subtle perfumes, and let them be the daughters of old kings, stars that have paled before me at my rising, what time I dawned on Asia. (*He rises from his throne and stands at his full height and all the crowd abase themselves in Oriental fashion.*) I bid you riot, riot; I say riot.

[*Enter NEARCHOS. He strides firmly in and walks right up to ALEXANDER. He bows respectfully but not in the Eastern manner.*

NEARCHOS: Is this Alexander?

ALEXANDER: Even Alexander.

NEARCHOS: Is this the state that should be kept by the world's conqueror?

ALEXANDER: Who can say that but I? Who else has conquered the world? Come, come, Nearchos, drink with us.

NEARCHOS: It is not fitting.

ALEXANDER: True, for you are ten goblets behind the soberest of us—but we will none of us start until you have drunk ten goblets.

NEARCHOS: It is not fitting, for it is a time to mourn.

ALEXANDER: Why, O Nearchos?

NEARCHOS: Because I have seen trembling and shaking to and fro the hand that holds the holy sceptre of Asia.

ALEXANDER: Why? Does it shake? No one has told me this.

NEARCHOS: Hold forth thy sword, Alexander. (ALEXANDER *holds it out; it shakes.*)

NEARCHOS: See.

ALEXANDER: There is a wind that blows across the plains that shakes my sword. My hand is not shaking.

NEARCHOS: There were great winds at Issus. There thy sword shook not.

ONE: Bah, old man, bah.

ANOTHER: The night's cold and the sheep are coughing. Go and talk to the sheep.

ALEXANDER: My hand shakes.

A THIRD (*with drunken solemnity*): What you say about Alexander's sword, what you say about his sword, is a lie, what you say about his sword.

ALEXANDER: Trouble him not! It is true! My hand shakes.

NEARCHOS: Even so.

ALEXANDER: My hand shakes. Hither Nearchos. What do men say of me?

NEARCHOS: They say that Alexander is not to be found in the great cities nor in the council-chambers of kings, but in some wayside place drinks or sings foolish songs and remembers not who he was or what he has done.

ALEXANDER: And what say you?

NEARCHOS: I say that (*pointing at ALEXANDER*) this is not Alexander, of whom they say these things; for Alexander was wise and temperate, a valiant, austere soldier. I say this is not Alexander.

ONE: Old man, your head will be put into a bucket of muddy water and held there a long time.

ALEXANDER (*almost embracing NEARCHOS*): Tell me, Nearchos, old friend, what should I do?

SOME: Go away old man, go forth and cough among the sheep.

ALEXANDER: Do not heed these. What should I do, Nearchos?

NEARCHOS: Come as of old to Greece. Be seen in Athens. Rule men as of old from some great city, Persepolis or Athens.

ALEXANDER: No. But from Babylon. I'll blaze upon the world from Babylon. There I'll put on the holy crown of Asia.

NEARCHOS (*admiring*): Babylon?

SCENE I

ALEXANDER

ALEXANDER: Even from that great city. I'll be your leader once again, Nearchos.

NEARCHOS: Aye. Babylon.

ALEXANDER: Thence we will conquer the Amazons and their queen. Nearchos, I am Alexander yet.

[NEARCHOS *kneels and takes ALEXANDER'S hand, abasing his head below it.*

CURTAIN

ACT III. SCENE II

The Hall of the Fates. Dresses and all are grey.

Curtain rises. ATROPOS rises and snips a thread, drops shears on floor near LACHESIS and goes back to her seat.

LACHESIS: Ah Destiny, Destiny.

CLOTHO: How long, how long we have laboured,
three grim grey women at the woof.

LACHESIS: In the time of Zeus the father and the old
time of Chronos before him.

CLOTHO: How many threads I have spun.

LACHESIS: How many threads I have woven. Al-
ways she cuts our threads, not even one
has escaped her.

CLOTHO: Our poor grey threads were but of tears and
laughter, of tears and laughter I spun
them, O my sister, but now I have given
thee a thread of gold.

LACHESIS: It is indeed of gold, how bright it is and
what a joy for our eyes. Is this that
dances along it that holy thing named
light?

CLOTHO: It is even light, my sister.

LACHESIS: Is it not wonderful? I would that Destiny
had permitted God to place our lot
amongst the fields of men.

CLOTHO: It is no lot to be desired, my sister; for men
are shadows in Hades, as thou knowest,
save only a very few.

LACHESIS: Yet to have seen the sun!

CLOTHO: He whose thread we weave and spin shall
surely look long on the sunlight.

LACHESIS: Shall not our terrible sister be able to
shear it asunder?

CLOTHO: She shall not close her shears on so glad a
thread, for is it not the joy of our dark
house?

LACHESIS: Yet hath she sundered all, our most swift
sister.

CLOTHO: Her shears have only clipped the thin grey
threads, the little thin grey threads of
tears and laughter; they will not close
upon our golden thread. What a
thread I have spun thee, even I, Clotho.

LACHESIS: It is indeed of gold, and a great thread
and a strong one.

CLOTHO: Never before have we seen a thread of gold
and a thread not for Atropos. Never
before danced light on the grey woof of
thy weaving.

LACHESIS: Whose life is it I weave with the golden
cord not for Atropos?

CLOTHO: I have spun for thee Alexander.

LACHESIS: Alexander, Alexander. Surely kings were his forbears that he brings the shimmer of light to our grey house and to our weaving.

CLOTHO: My earth dreams that came down from the fields where light is and greenness tell how a queen was his mother, and how some say that his father was King of Macedon, and others that he was Zeus, the child of Chronos.

LACHESIS: Never was such a thread. Alexander, O Alexander.

CLOTHO: The best thread of my spinning.

LACHESIS: He shall have our love for the light that he brought to our dark house, and our aid in the fields of greenness.

CLOTHO: We will give him strength in the world, in the fields that look on Apollo.

LACHESIS: We will give him the throne of a king, and many crowns for his footstool.

CLOTHO: We will give him victory, and kingdoms by right and by conquest.

LACHESIS: Are we not the Fates to reward a man as it please us?

CLOTHO: What more should a man desire of the gods, or of dark Destiny that sits behind them, than the friendship and the favour of us, three ageless women sitting at the woof?

LACHESIS: She doth not speak, our sister Atropos.

CLOTHO: What should she say though she spoke? It is a sweet thing to spin, and to weave is sweet; and pleasant it is to speak of the thin grey threads that I spin of tears and laughter, to be glad for a little while and to see the sun. But of what should she speak, and what words can she say save only "I have ended, I have ended"?

LACHESIS: Indeed she seldom speaks, and what should she say? For surely Destiny has given her no pleasant task to tell of, but a sad task to do swiftly.

ATROPOS: Give me the shears.

LACHESIS: Oh, Atropos.

CURTAIN

ACT IV. SCENE I

*Babylon, just inside the great gateway, under the towers.
In the centre a black pyramid of steps with a golden
throne on top of them.*

1ST ARCHER: We've been here a weary time.

2ND ARCHER: Yes comrade, but we shall see Alexander crowned in Babylon.

1ST ARCHER: Yes, surely.

2ND ARCHER: A sight such as the ages have not seen.

1ST ARCHER: Will it be very glorious?

2ND ARCHER: It is scarcely to be thought of. The great captains will come first with their guards, and the ambassadors of the three great nations with their barbarians. These will be here to welcome him. Then he comes and we all make obeisance, Greeks and barbarians together. And he will go up and sit upon the throne and put the crown of Asia on his head.

1ST ARCHER: And then, comrade?

2ND ARCHER: Then we shall all cry out and worship him.

1ST ARCHER: And after he has put the crown upon his head and we have worshipped him?

2ND ARCHER: Why then the princes come up on elephants, and the camel men will go by with the golden trumpets. Men say that it will be the grandest scene in the history of the world, either past or future.

1ST ARCHER: Either past or future?

2ND ARCHER: So the historians say, and the prophets also.

1ST ARCHER: And we shall see it.

2ND ARCHER: Yes, we shall see it.

1ST ARCHER: And when shall we fight again?

2ND ARCHER: They say that when he is crowned Alexander will move with his whole army and the three great nations against the neighbouring Amazons, and bring Queen Rhododactilos to this place and wed her with great ceremony.

1ST ARCHER: Ah, then there will be more pomp. Alexander did not always love great shows.

2ND ARCHER: No, not always, but things are different now. Do you remember Hipporax of the Hoplites?

1ST ARCHER: Yes. A blunt, honest fellow, but careless with his tongue.

2ND ARCHER: He is condemned to death.

1ST ARCHER: What for?

2ND ARCHER: Blasphemy.

1ST ARCHER: What did he say?

2ND ARCHER: He said that Alexander has a fever.

1ST ARCHER: Well, it is marshy land round Babylon,
many have fever, why not . . . ?

2ND ARCHER: Hush. How can fever touch the sons
of God?

1ST ARCHER: Is Alexander truly the son of Zeus?

2ND ARCHER: He has said so, and the priests do not
deny it: that is enough for us.

1ST ARCHER: It will be enough for poor Hipporax.
Well, well, his tongue was too long and
it was bound to hang him. When will
he die?

2ND ARCHER: After the proclamation of Alexander
as son of God and emperor of Asia.

1ST ARCHER: Poor Hipporax. It is hard that one
man should be the son of God while
another should be a poor soldier.

2ND ARCHER: Do not speak treason.

1ST ARCHER: I do not speak treason, I only . . .

2ND ARCHER: Hush, the great captains come.

[Enter GREAT CAPTAINS, AMBASSA-
DORS, *retinue*.

PTOLEMY (*to the three AMBASSADORS*): And when he
places the crown upon his head you will
all cry out, rendering homage to him in
the name of your people and of your god.
And when this is done *you* will cry out
and render homage in the name of *your*

people and of your god also. After which *you* will cry out in like manner and render homage unto him in the name of *your* people and god.

A GREEK: And what shall *we* do when he places the crown upon his head?

PTOLEMY: You will also render homage in the name of your god.

GREEK: Our god is Zeus.

PTOLEMY: Ah, yes. You kneel upon the lowest step and ask whether he be content to receive homage on behalf of Olympian Zeus. He will doubtless say that it were not meet that the father should pay homage to the son. You will then retire, making obeisance, and the elephants come up. Where is the commander of the elephants?

COMMANDER OF ELEPHANTS: Here, Ptolemy.

PTOLEMY: Is all ready?

COMMANDER OF ELEPHANTS: It is ready.

PTOLEMY: That is well.

COMMANDER OF ELEPHANTS: Upon what signal do the elephants march?

PTOLEMY: When we all hail him as the son of God. Where is the captain of the camel-guard?

CAPTAIN OF CAMEL-GUARD: Here, Ptolemy.

PTOLEMY: When the elephants kneel by the throne
the camel-guard goes by behind them
at the walk, the musicians playing.

CAPTAIN OF CAMEL-GUARD: Yes, Ptolemy.

PTOLEMY: What music have you commanded them to
play?

CAPTAIN OF CAMEL-GUARD: The song that Marthos
made in honour of God.

PTOLEMY: Ah, very good. On the golden trumpets?

CAPTAIN OF CAMEL-GUARD: Yes, Ptolemy.

PTOLEMY: That is well. And then? What follows
then?

PARAXONES: Then I come when the camels have gone
past.

PTOLEMY: Who are you?

PARAXONES: I lead the dance of the thousand women.

PTOLEMY: Ah yes, when the camels have gone past,
yes. And then the priests of all the
gods in the world. You all know your
stations. (*A murmur.*) That is well. Now
when the procession arrives you kneel
upon the ground but do not prostrate
yourselves till he crowns himself.

*[A woman comes on coughing. A sentry
puts out his arm barring the way
without looking at her.]*

SHE: Let me come, let me come. I'll see Alexander
crowned.

SENTRY: You cannot come here, mother, this place to-day is sacred.

PARAXONES: What! Did I not hear Thais? (*He looks straight at her and then round about.*) Did I not hear Thais?

THAIS: Yes, it is Thais. Thais with a cough, and not immortal like Alexander.

PARAXONES: Thais!

[*Enter an ARCHER.*

ARCHER: The procession is coming.

PTOLEMY: To your places.

AMBASSADOR OF THE ARABS: Must we kneel now?

PTOLEMY: No. Not till he comes to the cypress. All kneel then. (*To the ARCHER.*) Where is he?

ARCHER: He is past the palm-trees.

PTOLEMY: Be ready. I shall give word and all kneel together. (*To the ARCHER.*) Has he come to the cypress?

ARCHER: The procession has stopped.

PTOLEMY: Stopped? For what cause?

ARCHER: I cannot see the cause. Alexander stops. . . . Now he comes on again.

PTOLEMY: Now is he by the cypress?

ARCHER: He has stopped again.

PTOLEMY: He has stopped, you say?

ARCHER: Yes, he has stopped to speak to a veteran soldier. . . . He is on again now.

PTOLEMY: Has he come to the cypress?

ARCHER: He is just nigh it.

PTOLEMY (*raising his hand*): Let all men kneel.

ARCHER: Now he has stopped again. He speaks to one of his escort. Now he comes on.

PTOLEMY: Where is he now?

ARCHER: He is not much past the cypress. The procession moves slowly. And now he stops to speak to another soldier.

PTOLEMY: Rise up till I give the word again.

[PTOLEMY goes to the high place.

ARCHER: Now he comes on once more. Ah, but he stops to speak again. He sits down as he speaks. He is seated upon a log.

PTOLEMY (*on the high place*): *Hither Perdiccas!* (PTOLEMY and PERDICCAS exchange glances on the high place by the ARCHER.) Now he is coming. You may kneel again.

[Enter ALEXANDER.

ALEXANDER: Did I not say "I will come to Babylon?"

PTOLEMY: Indeed, you said it, Alexander.

ALEXANDER: I have come to Babylon. (*Pause.*) I am with friends; I have no need of armour. (*He removes his helmet. The procession advances.*) Halt. Hither, Ptolemy. I would show my trust in Ptolemy; march at my right hand. (*He puts his arm round his neck.*) And you also, Perdiccas—my trust in you—I

would show that also—march at my left (*he puts his other arm round PERDICCAS's neck*), but slowly, for many of our men are weary, slowly Perdiccas. (*He comes on thus supported.*)

PTOLEMY: I fear your Grace is ill.

ALEXANDER: Ill, Ptolemy? Ill? No, no. Fatigued perhaps a little. A man may be fatigued who has conquered the world. I am not ill.

PERDICCAS: I fear your Grace is ill.

ALEXANDER: I say I am not ill. What illness should there come to the sons of God. I am tired, Ptolemy, a little tired.

PTOLEMY: We will assist your Grace.

[*They come to the steps.*]

ALEXANDER: Stop, Ptolemy. No mortal man shall tread these steps of onyx. I must go up alone. (*He ascends. He stops, panting.*) It is a fitting throne for the son of God. (*He goes on. He sits down.*) I am tired, Ptolemy. (*He tries to crawl higher, he falls prone on a step.*) I have conquered the world and I am tired.

AMBASSADOR: Your son of Zeus is sick.

ALEXANDER: Sick! I say that sickness comes not to the immortals. I say that I am immortal like my father, whom Chronos begat in the old time. (1ST AMBASSADOR *moves away contemptuously with his men.* Men

come up the steps and lift up ALEXANDER.)
Up. Up to the throne. I say up.
*(They carry him down. The ARABS and
NOMADS crowd up and look curiously.)*
Kneel, Arabs; and you, people of the
Nomads, kneel; for I am the immortal
son of Zeus. *(They do not kneel.)* Ptol-
emy! Ptolemy! What is this, Ptolemy?
They dare to disobey Alexander.

PTOLEMY: They do not understand. They are an
untutored people.

ALEXANDER: They understand me when my sword is
out. Then they are tutored. Give me
my sword. *(They lay him upon a litter.)*
Give me my sword. *(One draws it and
puts it into his hand. It falls to the ground.)*
Give me my sword.

ONE *(to* ANOTHER): No, no, it is too heavy.

ALEXANDER: Kings have found it so. *(Clutching at his
heart.)* But what is this? I am the heir
of Philip! I inherit! I inherit from
Philip of Macedon what he had from
his father, the same that his father had
from the old time.

SYCOPHANTES: Indeed you inherit Macedon. Yet
are you the son of Zeus though heir to
Philip.

ALEXANDER: It is not Macedon that I inherit now,
but man's sure legacy, the human heir-
loom—even death. O Philip, my father,
by this I know that I am your son and

heir. Philip of Macedon, my father,
my father.

ONE: He does not say he is the son of Zeus.

ALEXANDER: Philip my father, for how long have I
disowned you. What has man to do
with his betters that he should claim
kinship with the immortals gods?

[Enter PRIEST.

PRIEST: Is it not time to repent and to turn to the
most high gods, and will you not make
peace with Apollo now?

ALEXANDER (*to a HERALD*): Go you to Delphi and
to the sacred shrine, and kneel in the
doorway and call the name of Apollo,
and having called it thrice repeat these
words: "Thus saith Alexander: Be-
hold I am going down into the dark and
the long way that man knows not. Yet
think not that the victory is with Apollo,
for with my scant hours I have left a
name that his long long days shall not
surpass in glory." Say that I envy not
to the gods their calm, untroubled
faces——

PRIEST: Oh Blasphemy!

ALEXANDER: Aye, for it is easy for them to have age-
less calm who are not vexed by time or
the ills of Earth.

PRIEST: Be guided even yet by the gods in this your
last hour.

ALEXANDER (*to the PRIEST*): Hath a god died that they should presume to show the way to a traveller bound for a country to which they durst not go? Rather teach your god how to die, saying: Thus died Alexander. (*To the HERALD.*) And tell Apollo that it is well for the gods I die; for had I wedded Rhododactilos, that fair and terrible queen, we had reared up such a progeny as had overthrown the gods and taken from them Olympus by force of arms. (*He dies.*)

[*They all desert the body of ALEXANDER. Either night comes on and passes, or the curtain falls for a moment representing the passage of night.*]

CURTAIN

ACT IV. SCENE II

The same. All empty, just before dawn.

The body of ALEXANDER lies neglected, covered by a white sheet. It lies in the same part of the stage, in the same position, and at the same angle as did the statue of Xerxes in Act I, and prophecy is fulfilled.

The curtain rises. PERDICCAS slips in. He goes to the great steps furtively. He climbs them. He picks up ALEXANDER'S crown that lies upon a step. He sits on the throne. He crowns himself.

PERDICCAS: Ah-h-h-h.

[Enter PTOLEMY.]

PTOLEMY: Over what do you crown yourself?

PERDICCAS: Over Macedon and the whole of Hellas.

[PTOLEMY marches up the steps till he comes to the cloak. He dons it, looking at PERDICCAS.]

PTOLEMY: With this cloak I cloak myself. It is of Grecian work. Grecian hands made it. That is the crown of Asia. Egyptians wrought it; you are barbarously crowned over barbarous kingdoms. For me, Macedon.

PERDICCAS: By my crown I will not rule over barbarians.

PTOLEMY: By my sword I will have Macedon.

PERDICCAS: And I, Ptolemy? Have I no sword?

PTOLEMY: I know not. I do not see it.

PERDICCAS (*drawing and holding the sword forward in PTOLEMY's face*): See it, Ptolemy.

[PTOLEMY *draws; he moves about seeking to come at PERDICCAS.*

PTOLEMY: You are on a high place, Perdiccas.

PERDICCAS: A high place, Ptolemy.

PTOLEMY: If we were level this matter were soon settled.

PERDICCAS: I am on a high place. This is the throne of Macedon. (PTOLEMY *goes round behind. PERDICCAS turns too.*) Take Asia, Ptolemy.

PTOLEMY (*with scorn*): Asia!

PERDICCAS: Then Egypt!

PTOLEMY: Egypt!

PERDICCAS: The kingdoms of Egypt, the Upper and the Lower.

PTOLEMY: A land of dogs!

PERDICCAS: See, I will give to you their barbarous crown. You shall be King of Egypt.

PTOLEMY: Am I not Ptolemy? What should I have to do with Egypt?

PERDICCAS: Here I stand King of Macedon.

PTOLEMY: I will be King of Macedon and all Hellas.

PERDICCAS: No, I am King, and crowned. You shall be King of Egypt.

[Enter NEARCHOS. *He looks upon the corpse of ALEXANDER.*

NEARCHOS: So he is dead and there are no more kings.

[PERDICCAS *looks at NEARCHOS uneasily. He transfers his sword to his left hand.*

PERDICCAS: Your hand, Ptolemy.

[PTOLEMY *also looks at NEARCHOS uneasily, clasps hands with PERDICCAS. They put up their swords. They put off robe and crown.*

PTOLEMY: Of course he's dead. The old fool. We must offer him Persia.

PERDICCAS: If that old man speaks to the army—they may misunderstand us.

[NEARCHOS *still gazes mournfully at ALEXANDER.*

PTOLEMY: You and I together, with our men, would overcome his following.

PERDICCAS: And after the battle, Ptolemy? There are many wolves in Persia.

PTOLEMY: The Persians do not know how many we lost in India.

PERDICCAS: We must not fight in Persia.

[NEARCHOS *walks slowly towards them.*

NEARCHOS: Greeting.

PTOLEMY and PERDICCAS: Greeting, Nearchos.

[NEARCHOS *comes on in silence.*

PERDICCAS: Greeting, King of Persia.

NEARCHOS: So we are kings.

PTOLEMY: Why yes, Nearchos.

NEARCHOS: And I, the old sea-wanderer, King of Persia?

PERDICCAS: Yes, yes, Nearchos.

NEARCHOS: And Alexander unburied?

PERDICCAS: Why, we have had great affairs to attend to.

NEARCHOS: And you are kings also?

PERDICCAS: Why yes, Ptolemy, and I. . . . Is it not so, Ptolemy?

PTOLEMY: Why yes, there must be kings.

[NEARCHOS *kneels down and bows his head.*

NEARCHOS: I make obeisance to such kings.

PERDICCAS: But you also, Nearchos—you also shall be a king.

NEARCHOS: Even so, O King; but not of your kind.

PERDICCAS: Of what kind, O Nearchos.

NEARCHOS: To the old old troubled kingdom that has known me long, where the rulers rule or die, I shall go back: where revolution is the state occasion, the daily ceremony. There kings are kings indeed. For I go back to mid-ocean by the long ways of

the sea, with a helm for my sceptre; and if I rule the long waves well I live, and if I rule them idly then I die, and my people bury me—as you have never buried King Alexander.

PERDICCAS: We had not time to bury Alexander.

NEARCHOS: You had not time. I go now to my kingdom, therefore let us three kings say farewell for ever. I go, but I shall never see the shore, never see promontories of distant land, but I shall reverently hail the earth as the grave of Alexander, by whatever chance this honour come to it, whether his bones rot down to it one by one, or whether you find time to bury him.

PERDICCAS: We offered you kingdoms, Nearchos, and you taunt us, and speak about the sea.

NEARCHOS: If I have need of easy idle kingdoms, why, I shall take them. The sides of Aethiopia are naked near me, and India with her jewels, and the rivers of Persia; Hellas shall hear me singing as I go by at night. I shall take kingdoms if I have the mood; when I grow too old perhaps for the great blue kingdom that yesterday was grey and is white to-morrow; I shall take kingdoms. Do not be easy on your golden thrones. (*He bows deeply. Exit, perhaps patting ALEXANDER's hand as he goes.*) We shall not forget you.

PTOLEMY: Let us kill him.

PERDICCAS: We must not fight in Persia.

PTOLEMY: Will he attack us?

PERDICCAS: He has not men enough. He cannot attack us.

PTOLEMY: Crazy old man! He remembers Alexander.

PERDICCAS: His simple mind thinks of the past only.

PTOLEMY: We have the present to see to. Let us talk.

PERDICCAS: Not here. Let us draw aside privily.
Ho sentry!

[Enter SENTRY.]

PERDICCAS (*moving towards curtains*): Guard this place. Come not too near it.

[Exeunt PERDICCAS and PTOLEMY through double curtains. Enter two ARCHERS.]

1ST ARCHER: Where are the great captains?

SENTRY: They are in there. None may enter.

1ST ARCHER: We have an urgent matter to report to the great captains.

SENTRY: None may enter.

2ND ARCHER: We were watching in the tower; a man from the high places may report at all times.

SENTRY: None may enter.

2ND ARCHER: We must report.

SENTRY: They will be out soon. What is it?

ARCHER: What are they doing?

SENTRY: They are dividing the world. They will be out soon.

ARCHER: It's an army.

SENTRY: An army here?

ARCHER: An army coming against Babylon.

SENTRY: Is it a large army?

ARCHER: It will seem large to us when we are in amongst it.

SENTRY: Fighting then?

ARCHER: It might be.

SENTRY: Who are they?

ARCHER: I know not.

SENTRY: What are they like?

ARCHER: They carry a palanquin of gold; a thing, I should say, for some god.

2ND ARCHER: It is not a palanquin, it is a catafalque.

1ST ARCHER: I think it is a palanquin. But you must acquaint the great captains.

SENTRY: As it is an army I will acquaint them.

[*Exit* SENTRY.]

1ST ARCHER: It is a hard thing, comrade, that none will bury Alexander.

2ND ARCHER: What matters it what becomes of Alexander now that we are governed by plain honest men.

1ST ARCHER: Indeed you are right, comrade. And yet he was worthy perhaps of burial.

2ND ARCHER: Much has come out of late concerning Alexander.

1ST ARCHER: Why yes. Hath it not? They say, do they not, that he was harsh to our good leaders?

2ND ARCHER: Indeed, I have it from Perdiccas himself that this was so. Let us be thankful that we are done with him and have plain honest leaders. With Alexander no one knew where he would be a week hence, or what he would say, or what strange plan would come into his head.

1ST ARCHER: Yet some say—do they not—that he was a good soldier?

2ND ARCHER: There has been much said lately about that.

1ST ARCHER: Not such a soldier, I do not mean, as our captains; yet in his way perhaps a fair man-at-arms.

2ND ARCHER: I do not think so. At the battle of Issus they say that the orders he gave were ludicrous and had no bearing on the art of war. The captains won the battle.

1ST ARCHER: Is that so?

2ND ARCHER: You have my word for it.

1ST ARCHER: I do not doubt you.

2ND ARCHER: And there is more than this being said of Alexander.

1ST ARCHER: Yet would I have given him burial.

2ND ARCHER: It is better to let him lie, as a warning to all such headstrong people who interfere with plain men that know their own business.

1ST ARCHER: Perhaps it is better.

[*Enter PERDICCAS and PTOLEMY arm in arm, PERDICCAS wearing the crown.*]

PERDICCAS: And so Ptolemy we will settle this matter. (PTOLEMY *shrugs his shoulders.*) It is a fair country. And some day you will come to love the Egyptians almost as though they were—as though they were Greeks.

PTOLEMY: Greeks! But let us hear these men's report.

PERDICCAS: Ah yes. You have come down from a high place?

2ND ARCHER: Yes, your majesty.

PERDICCAS (*pleased and purring*): Ah-h.

PTOLEMY: Make your report.

2ND ARCHER: A great army is coming against Babylon.

PTOLEMY: A great army?

1ST ARCHER: Yes, it is a great army.

PTOLEMY: Foot or horse?

2ND ARCHER: Foot. Its vans are already about our walls.

1ST ARCHER: They had marched by night. It was not till dawn we saw them.

PERDICCAS: Ptolemy, Ptolemy. We have let this come upon us, you and I.

PTOLEMY: Well; we will fight them. Is the guard turned out?

2ND ARCHER: The guard is out.

PTOLEMY: And the alarm sounded?

2ND ARCHER: The men are at their posts.

PTOLEMY: We will fight them, Perdikkas.

PERDICCAS: We have not the men.

PTOLEMY: They do not know how many we lost in India.

PERDICCAS: They will find out that if we attack them.

PTOLEMY: Then what's to do?

[The silver trumpets are heard.]

PERDICCAS: We must parley.

PTOLEMY: And if they will not parley.

✓ PERDICCAS: Offer them gifts.

PTOLEMY: What shall we offer them?

PERDICCAS: The best we have. Even to India. But we cannot fight.

PTOLEMY: I will not give up Babylon.

PERDICCAS: Even Babylon if they ask it.

PTOLEMY: But Babylon is the capital of the world. He meant to rule here.



PERDICCAS: Have they good armour?

2ND ARCHER: They are all in mail. They have brazen greaves upon them. Dawn came and we saw them shining.

1ST ARCHER: They were quite close.

PERDICCAS: And they march soldierly?

2ND ARCHER: They come with a fierce stride. They have skirts to their knees like the Greeks and they all swing together.

1ST ARCHER: The greaves beneath were flashing in the light. They march like Macedonians.

PERDICCAS: They could take Babylon, Ptolemy.

PTOLEMY: Ah for the bones that lie in India.

PERDICCAS: If we fight, they know our weakness.

PTOLEMY: Well, we will parley.

PERDICCAS: At the worst we will offer them Asia.

[Enter THE QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS
with a regiment of guards.]

PTOLEMY: For what purpose have you come up against great Babylon?

PERDICCAS: O puissant Queen, we be the conquerors of the world, and yet, within reason, demand of us what you will and go your way in peace, for we be aweary of war. Take India, only go hence.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: I will not go hence.

PERDICCAS: Consider India! There are towers there that are all mother-of-pearl; towers of tortoise-shell, and towers of ivory: the archers on them are all armed in silver. There is a city of India walled with onyx, and an old dungeon there in which kings only suffer; the chains on its walls are golden, and golden are the fetters in the floor. They say the mire in it is full of crowns.

So famed for turquoises are the Indian hills that it is told me that their peaks in heaven may scarcely be distinguished from the sky, so azure are they with their wondrous jewel.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: I will not be content with India.

PERDICCAS: Consider, O Queen. Its shores are so strewn with pearls where they run down all golden to the sea (whether by divers flinging them on the beach, or by the listless wash of Indian tides) that hand-fuls may be gathered by all who list.

And more than this was told me in India: for all these things men have told me, but with my own eyes I have seen the elephant, doing his work in battle.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: It is told me how you have within this city, and are all unworthy of it, one of the wonders of the world. Give it up or I burn Babylon.

PERDICCAS: Indeed, O Queen, we have the hanging garden, the same Darius made. It is in ill repair, and it were hard indeed to fetch it hence, yet . . .

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: Give up to me the body of Alexander.

PERDICCAS: Of Alexander? Where is it?

ONE: It lies there.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS (*turning*): Oh Alexander.

PERDICCAS: I hear that you have brought amongst your army, as some men say a catafalque of gold, and, as others say, the palanquin of some immortal god.

QUEEN OF THE AMAZONS: Indeed I cannot say which of the two it be. He was scarce like to one of the sons of men, but like to the sons of men he is now dead. (*She goes up to the neglected body.*)

CURTAIN

THE OLD KING'S TALE

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

KING HODIATHON.

THARDEES } *Two Lovers.*
ARANIA }

THE HERALD.

THE OLD KING'S TALE

Place: A fair country.

Scene: Anything in the wide world.

Time: Now, or never.

KING HODIATHON *is seated upon some steps in the centre back. He is poorly dressed in an old whitish robe. His beard is white.*

Enter two lovers. (She R. He L.)

They meet in the centre of the stage.

THARDEES: What tidings, O Arania?

ARANIA: Oh, evil tidings, Thardees.

THARDEES: Alas. I also.

ARANIA: Oh, what say they, Thardees?

THARDEES: They say that it was not the wish of the gods that two so young should marry. They said that the gods willed otherwise, for this had not been before. Had the gods willed it, they said, it must have happened often and been wanted; but it is not customary for the young to wed as young as we.

ARANIA: O Thardees, the gods are silly. What said they, Thardees?

THARDEES: They said it must not be.

ARANIA: O Thardees.

THARDEES: And what said they to you, Arania?

THE OLD KING'S TALE

ARANIA: They said the same, Thardees. They said I was too young and the gods did not wish it. They took counsel of the priests and the priests went into their temple, and answered that it was not the wish of the gods. What do the gods know about these things, Thardees?

THARDEES: They should not have troubled the gods.

ARANIA: Why do they do so, Thardees, and make us unhappy?

THARDEES: They forget their youth.

ARANIA: We will not forget, Thardees, will we?

THARDEES: I do not wish ever to live to be old. I think that after thirty all is sadness.

ARANIA: For us it is sad always. We must part, Thardees.

THARDEES: No, no, Arania. No, not yet. They said: No more after to-day. But to-day is ours still, Arania. To-morrow belongs to the gods and the old men.

ARANIA: Alas, Thardees! Our days were such happy days: there will be no days like those among the days of the gods and the old men.

THARDEES: Alas, Arania, half our day is gone. Where were you all the morning, O Arania? All the morning I sought you. By our old paths I went and did not find you. You were gone from our woods, and all their ways were mournful.

THE OLD KING'S TALE

ARANIA: O Thardees.

THARDEES: We shall walk their ways no more.

ARANIA: I was on the headland, Thardees. I was looking towards the sea. There was so lovely a ship come into the harbour that I looked at it all the morning. It was all white like a mountain, and beautiful pale-blue pennants flew from the masts over the huge white sails.

THARDEES: That was from a far country.

ARANIA: Yes, some far country. O Thardees, I think it is some lovely country that sends so fair a ship. I think that they dance there, far away, and sing; and wed when they love and know no dreadful gods. And then, Thardees, a herald came from the ship, with a lovely silken gonfalon on his trumpet; and he went the way of the hamlets on the hills, blowing his trumpet in the morning. O, Thardees, it was beautiful on the hills.

THARDEES: How had you the heart, Arania, to see beauty upon the hills? The beauty of the hills is gone and the joy of the woods with them. And they that have taken them from us, what will they do with them? They are old and have forgotten the way of joy. Why do no sorrows overtake other men?

THE OLD KING'S TALE

ARANIA: There are none so luckless as we.

THARDEES: Was ever any man so sad as I?

KING HODIATHON: O Lovers, hear my tale. (*They turn towards him, noticing him for the first time. They move nearer to him, lifting up their hands a little in surprise. THARDEES goes towards his left hand, ARANIA towards his right.*) O Lovers, in a far country my father was the king.

ARANIA: Your father was king?

KING HODIATHON: Yes, in a far country.

ARANIA: King's son, tell us your story.

[*They sit on each side of him.*]

KING HODIATHON: My father sent me upon a journey in the charge of one trusted duke, that I might see the countries of the world. So we kissed the beard and sceptre of my father, and set forth on a morning, and came in the course of days to the lands of others. I sojourned long in a land that was near the morning towards the birth of the sun. O Lovers, it was one of the lands of song.

ARANIA: Was it very beautiful? Was it lovelier than our hills?

KING HODIATHON: It was scarcely a hundred leagues, they said, from the very morning. It was nearly a part of the dawn. One day

THE OLD KING'S TALE

a herald came to the court of the king,
my cousin, bearing a gonfalon of crape.
My father, that austere beloved prince,
was dead.

ARANIA: Ah. Was it long ago?

KING HODIATHON: It was in my youth. The king of that land near the sun (he was named the King of the Morning) gave us a retinue and his choicest camels, for the desert lay between him and the lands that knew my father: we took the way of the desert for sake of speed. In fifty days we should have crossed the desert, and then ten days with horses to see the hills of my home; for I was now the king of that country, and speed was urgent that I might fulfil the sacrifice that was my father's due, at the foot of his sepulchre, while yet his ghost could perceive it, and then reign in his stead. We travelled through the desert thirty days. We went the way of the sun. All day we travelled, but before nightfall came we pitched our tents by sunlight on the sand. The sand was like the gold that the rivers sift, which the merchants bring in their shallow onyx cups. The air was cold by night under those great stars, but the soft sand was warm until midnight passed. After the thirtieth day as we travelled towards evening the evil wind blew from the

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going down of the sun. It blew like the whisper of a woman at night. The gold sands danced to the whisper, and all was whisper and darkness. And we knew it for the wind that all men curse. O Lovers, our camels died!

ARANIA: Oh! And you were fond of your camels.

KING HODIATHON: We were fond of life. Our retinue gave up their water to us; for three days they carried it and would not drink. Nothing could move them from their purpose; it was the command of their king. We could not cross the desert now, but we struck southwards to find the desert's edge, where the dark forest is. On the fourth day all our retinue died, and the duke from my country and I went on southwards over the sand.

[He hangs his head and is silent.]

ARANIA: And then?

KING HODIATHON: Then we were alone.

ARANIA: And so you came to the dark forest?

KING HODIATHON: My brave companion died. There was only water for one and he would have it so. He would not drink and he died. I alone came, on the tenth day, to the forest.

ARANIA: You found water there?

KING HODIATHON: There were huge nameless rivers.

THE OLD KING'S TALE

THARDEES: Sir, you have told us a sad tale indeed; yet we who love each other lose more than comrade, retinue and camels. There is none so sad as we.

KING HODIATHON: O Lovers, I lived for a year amongst naked men. Meanly I lived amongst a savage people. For all that year I did not see the sun, but only the glint of it on great leaves above me. They hunted with little bows and had no king and worshipped rats as gods.

ARANIA: Was it very dark in the forest?

KING HODIATHON: It was the home of darkness. I lived there for a year. Sometimes the shadow of it falls on my mind, in these years, even now.

ARANIA: Oh, it was long ago; you must forget it.

KING HODIATHON: At times the shadow of huge trees falls on my mind.

ARANIA: There are no shadows here. It is all sunlight.

KING HODIATHON: At the end of that evil year there was talk in the huts. A party of the savage men were going on a journey. They talked in the evenings and pointed. They seemed to point northwards. One evening they all slipped away, running softly. I joined them and they let me come. There was a way over the desert that they had learned. I crossed the

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desert with them, going northwards. I left them at night, and never learned why they had made the journey. I walked northwards many days through an unknown land and came to the borders of a country I knew. To west of it lay my home.

ARANIA (*gladly*): Oh!

KING HODIATHON: O Lovers, there was war in that country!

ARANIA (*sadly*): Oh!

KING HODIATHON: No man might cross it. No one knew me there. I tarried long on the border. I toiled, as I had learned to toil, with my hands. A year passed by. Still there was war in that country. I waited still on the border toiling with my hands. Another year was gone. I lived in a rude hut that I built of reeds by the river. The war raged on and the third year went by. O Lovers, I was five years from my home.

I would wait no longer then, but set out north for the mountains, for there was a way round that country by a pass in the Northern Crag. I travelled for a year. I came to the pass far up on the shoulders of those great mountains. The heads of the mountains looked down on me in silence. The Blue Glacier had moved. O Lovers, the pass was blocked.

THE OLD KING'S TALE

ARANIA: O Thardees, there are other sorrows than ours.

KING HODIATHON: I travelled back again, and a year went over my wanderings. The war was over in the country I knew. I walked across it a worn, derided wanderer. I walked begging my bread. I came in the passing of days at last near the western boundary. I thought then soon to be home.

O Lovers, their king was dead and no man reigned.

ARANIA: Did they harm you? Were they at enmity with kings?

KING HODIATHON: They were searching for a king. One day when I was nearly free of their country a man stopped and looked at my eyes. O maiden, there is something in the eyes of a king that cannot be concealed. They took me from my road and made me their king.

O Lovers, it was a country of dogs. Their ways were evil. I sought to escape, but they would have a king. They brought me back to their palace. I sent messengers to my country, but they killed them. Again I sought to escape and they brought me back. A third time I tried, O Lovers. That people pursued and overtook me again. And that third time they stripped me of

THE OLD KING'S TALE

my robe; of my silken vestments they stripped me and took back their crown, and gave me my rags again and cast me out. O Lovers, it was on the far side they cast me out, across their eastern boundary. To the wrong side of their country they drove me away. I was a beggar again, and my own country was still without a king. They would not let me cross their frontier any more. To the North the huge Blue Glacier lay in the pass. I walked to the South and so came back to the Desert. (ARANIA *weeps*.) O maiden, weep not yet. You know not yet the sorrow of my story. At the Desert's edge I came on a caravan so suddenly which was going the way of my country, that I believed my gods were guarding me. They took me with them westwards and no wind blew; it was the fairest season the desert knows. I drew near to my own country.

ARANIA: After so long.

KING HODIATHON: O maiden, there lives a people in the Desert more evil than the wind that all men curse. O maiden, they attacked our caravan. A people with terrible spears. As a slave they sold me far off in a city by the sea.

THARDEES: Oh, woeful tale!

ARANIA (*sorrowfully*): You had no hope then.

THE OLD KING'S TALE

KING HODIATHON: I was not broken yet. Know that in my far country are harbours of the sea.

ARANIA: Were you near your own country?

KING HODIATHON: I was far and far away. Yet I had hope from the sea.

ARANIA: And did ships put out from that city for your country?

KING HODIATHON: I was a slave. No ship would take me.

THARDEES: How had you hope from the sea?

KING HODIATHON: Lovers, behold that tree. As it lies there, a huge log lay near the water in the city where they enslaved me. It was huge like that and forsaken, and near by the place of our toiling. I hollowed it out with knives. Behold how I hollowed it. (*He goes to the tree.*) I cut below it thus, and carried the cuttings away. I hollowed it out below. I worked in the darkness. My eyes never beheld the work of my knife. I hollowed it a little every day and no man knew of the hollowing. It lay thus always, still a smooth round tree. Then I made masts for it and laid them underneath. I made a sail of rags and secreted it thus.

ARANIA: You must have worked on it for many days.

THE OLD KING'S TALE

KING HODIATHON: O Lovers, I carved that boat in seven years!

ARANIA: In seven years!

THARDEES: O Arania, there are sorrows greater than ours.

KING HODIATHON: Not yet. You have not heard yet the sorrow of my story. When the seven years were gone I told the gang—we were twenty slaves in my gang—I told them that there was an order from one of the slave-drivers that the tree was to be pushed further down the beach. They believed me and we all pushed it down, and we left it when the tide was out, at a place between the high and the low.

I did this on an evening. At nightfall I slipped away. I went down to the water where the bloodhounds could not scent me. When they counted the slaves they would have searched the ships, and then they would have searched the booths in the city where the strong wine is for which the slaves risk death; for a slave does not run away to the bare sea. But in a while I heard the bloodhounds coming.

ARANIA: Oh!

KING HODIATHON: O maiden, the tide was in. Before the boat quite floated I turned it

THE OLD KING'S TALE

over, the water helping me, with one edge down on the sand. I was in the boat and casting the water out when I heard the bloodhounds coming. Then the tide came in and I pushed off in the darkness.

I set up the mast that night and hoisted my sail. O maiden, the wind was blowing towards my country.

I sailed before that strong wind ten days and eleven nights. Dawn came and I saw the spires of my native land, glittering low in the morning.

ARANIA: O exiled king, you saw your native land.

KING HODIATHON: I saw my native land. A contrary wind arose, rising up with the dawn. And then, O Lovers, O youth that asks what man is sad as you, O Lovers then I knew that the gods were against me.

[ARANIA *weeps afresh.* KING HODIATHON *ceases to speak.*

THARDEES: Oh, tell us all your tale.

KING HODIATHON: There is no more to tell: I knew that the gods were against me.

THARDEES: You never landed on your native coast?

KING HODIATHON: No, I was cast upon far distant shores.

THARDEES: You never came by land to your own country?

THE OLD KING'S TALE

KING HODIATHON: I sought to come no more. In many lands I have wandered. The gods are against me.

ARANIA: Do the gods never relent? (*Temple bells are heard.*) Hark! The bells of our temples. They say in our country that when those sweet bells ring on passing winds at evening that then the gods are at peace with all men within the sound of those bells.

KING HODIATHON: I do not hear them.

ARANIA (*she lays a hand on his*): Is there no help against the gods?

KING HODIATHON: Yes! Against one thing the gods are weak. They are like a fortress of adamant with one fragile door. Against youth alone they are weak. They durst not crush youth. The gods durst not. Go against them, O Lovers, and prevail.

ARANIA: We do not think of our sorrow any more. Oh, let us comfort you, poor wandering king. Go in our woods. Be happy in the beauty of our hills. Are they not perhaps as fair as your own far country nearly?

KING HODIATHON: Ah, yes. Your hills are fair.

ARANIA: They are beautiful, our hills. And all this morning a herald walked along them, come from a beautiful ship, a light-blue

THE OLD KING'S TALE

banner floated from his trumpet as he went along the hills, and the sun was shining on him all the morning.

KING HODIATHON (*without emotion*): Light blue? Why, that would be the banner of my country.

ARANIA: Of your country! The ship is there! The great ship in the harbour! (*He looks downward and is silent. The sound of a trumpet is heard.*) Hark!

[*Words are heard off, amongst which you distinguish "Hodiathon" and then "a far country."*]

THARDEES: It is the herald!

[KING HODIATHON *remains seated.*
Enter R. the HERALD. A light blue banner of silk hangs from his trumpet. He blows his trumpet and halts.

HERALD: Hath any here tidings of King Hodiathon, the lord of a far country?

[KING HODIATHON *watches him in silence.*
The Lovers watch the King in delighted, breathless expectancy.
The HERALD marches on. Exit L.

ARANIA: But you are the King!

[*The trumpet is heard again.*

HERALD (*off*): Hath any here tidings of King Hodiathon, the lord of a far country?

THE OLD KING'S TALE

KING HODIATHON (*to* ARANIA): No, no. It would be useless. The gods are against me. . . .

Fight them! Fight the gods! They cannot stand against youth.

[*The Lovers rising, THARDEES takes ARANIA in his arms.*]

THARDEES: Love, let us fight the gods.

CURTAIN

THE EVIL KETTLE

THE EVIL KETTLE

Scene : The House of Mrs. Watt.

Time : Tea time.

A room in a cottage. Window in centre of back looking out upon pleasant hills. Cupboard at right of back. Door R. near back. Table in centre. Fireplace left. Couch or sofa along wall L. with head touching back. This is as I see it, but all details are unimportant except the hills, and should not fetter the initiative or fancy of a producer. JAMES WATT, a lad of fifteen or sixteen, is leaning with folded arms on the window sill, looking at the hills. It is what is called a "costume play," period about 150 years ago.

MRS. WATT is laying the tablecloth.

MRS. WATT: Tea time.

JAMES WATT: (glancing over his shoulder and back again to window.) Yes, Mother.

[He goes on looking at the hills.]

MRS. WATT: (going on smoothing out the tablecloth.) Come on.

JAMES WATT : How lovely the hills are, Mother.

MRS. WATT: The hills? Of course they are.

JAMES WATT: There's such a golden light on them.

MRS. WATT: Come and watch the kettle.

THE EVIL KETTLE

JAMES WATT: All right, Mother; in a moment. I do so want to look at the hills. They are so lovely.

MRS. WATT: It's past five.

JAMES WATT: And the woods along the top. All the beech came out yesterday. The woods are like brass. Aren't they lovely, Mother?

MRS. WATT: Of course they are. All God's work is lovely. Come and watch the kettle, dearie.

JAMES WATT: What is God's work, Mother?

MRS. WATT: All the things what was intended, of course.

JAMES WATT: Didn't He make everything?

MRS. WATT: Not the ugly things. Satan makes the ugly things.

JAMES WATT: What are the things that were intended, Mother?

MRS. WATT: Oh questions, questions. What a boy it is to ask questions. I wonder if you'll be very wise when you grow up, for all the questions you've asked, or if you'll still be asking questions about everything. Deary me, I wonder.

JAMES WATT: Perhaps I'll be very wise, Mother, and still not know much.

MRS. WATT: I don't see as how that could be.

THE EVIL KETTLE

JAMES WATT: But what are the things that were intended, Mother?

MRS. WATT: Oh, well: woods and hills and flowers and butterflies, and the wind and the rain and the crops, and birds and young girls and all that kind of thing. Satan just makes the ugly things. Come on now.

JAMES WATT: But look at the hills, Mother, with that light on them.

[She goes to the window.]

MRS. WATT: Yes, there they are. I remember them hills before you were born or thought of.

JAMES WATT (*meditatively*): And they're still just the same.

MRS. WATT: Well, I wouldn't say just the same. They seem a little smaller like.

JAMES WATT: But they couldn't be smaller, Mother.

MRS. WATT: Oh, I don't know. The hills are so old they might have shrunk a little.

JAMES WATT: But they couldn't do that, Mother.

MRS. WATT: And they seemed to be brighter, somehow. The summers was warmer when I was young.

JAMES WATT: What would have caused that, Mother?

MRS. WATT: Oh, bless the boy! How can I tell? It was a long time ago and the days just used to be brighter. Come and watch the kettle. Make the tea the moment it boils,

THE EVIL KETTLE

JAMES WATT: Very well, Mother.

[She prepares teapot. He sits before the fire. She puts bread, plates, etc., on table. The kettle boils. WATT stretches out his hand to take it, then he draws it back. He clasps his hands round his knees and sits watching the kettle intently.]

JAMES WATT: Mother.

MRS. WATT: Well, child, what is it now?

JAMES WATT: There must be great force in a kettle, Mother.

MRS. WATT: In a kettle, child? What ever do you mean?

JAMES WATT: The lid is lifting up and down.

MRS. WATT: Then it's boiling. Make the tea quick.

JAMES WATT: There must be a great force in it, Mother, to lift the lid like that.

MRS. WATT: Bless the child. That's only steam.

JAMES WATT: Mother. I've been thinking that if steam can do that it might move a rod, mightn't it? And the rod might move a wheel.

MRS. WATT: Move a wheel, child?

JAMES WATT: Yes, Mother. And if we could set wheels moving we could do all the work men have to do without ever using horses.

THE EVIL KETTLE

MRS. WATT: Stands to reason you couldn't do it without horses, whatever steam could do.

JAMES WATT: Why Mother?

MRS. WATT: Why? Always asking why. Well, where does steam mostly come from? It goes up from the horses ploughing when they get hot. So where would you get your steam without them horses? You'd never get enough from them little kettles.

JAMES WATT: But Mother, I'll make big kettles.

MRS. WATT: Go on and make the tea. (*He pours water into the tea-pot.*) You'll never get a cup of tea to do the work of a horse.

JAMES WATT (*puts teapot on fire while MRS. WATT cuts bread, etc.*): I'll make big kettles when I grow up. (*He gazes at the kettle again.*) Whenever the lids move great iron bars will move with them. I'll fasten the bars to wheels, Mother, and I'll make steam do everything. All the work of the world would be done in the morning, and men could walk about the beautiful hills all the rest of the day.

[*Enter SATAN R. He crosses the room and taps JAMES WATT on his left shoulder. Stretching out his left arm he beckons to the window and goes there, JAMES WATT following, gazing dumbly.*]

SATAN is invisible to MRS. WATT.

THE EVIL KETTLE

She cannot see him though looking straight at him. At the window SATAN waves his left hand a few times upwards. Smoke as of factories rises up covering the entire landscape. The noise and clangour are heard of the twentieth century. The smoke lifts and a factory city appears in all its devilish ugliness, with an unsightly yellow poster in the foreground, on which is written: TAKE MEDICO. THE CURE FOR ALL AILMENTS. SO NICE. The smoke thickens again and the city is covered. Again it lifts and shows the city: and so on.

SATAN points at it. The boy stares speechless. SATAN slaps him on the back with cheerful encouragement. JAMES WATT turns and stares at SATAN with wide eyes and open mouth, motionless in horror at the idea that SATAN'S thanks were due to him for this. SATAN nods to him.

JAMES WATT (*in horror*): Oh!

[*SATAN passes his hand backwards and forwards before the window as one rubbing out a blackboard. The city and smoke disappear, the hills come back and the noise of the twentieth century ceases.*

When MRS. WATT hears JAMES WATT say "Oh" she looks up.

THE EVIL KETTLE

MRS. WATT: Why, Jimmy, what ever is the matter?

JAMES WATT: Oh, Mother, he wants me to do a dreadful thing.

MRS. WATT: Why, who wants you, child?

JAMES WATT: But I won't do it, Mother. I won't do it. (*To SATAN.*) I won't—I tell you I won't.

[*SATAN smiles with scornful assurance.*

MRS. WATT: You won't what, child? You won't what? What ever is it?

JAMES WATT: I won't, I won't.

[*JAMES WATT flies at SATAN and beats him with his fists upon his bare black folded arms, not easily reaching higher. SATAN goes on smiling with scornful assurance.*

MRS. WATT: Child, child, what has come over you? What ever are you doing?

[*She goes towards him anxiously. SATAN steps back and bows gracefully to JAMES WATT. Exit SATAN.*

JAMES WATT: I won't. I won't.

MRS. WATT: Jimmy, Jimmy, what ever is the matter?

JAMES WATT: He wants me to invent a bad thing, Mother! He wants to spoil our hills. He wants me to do it, Mother. He wants to cover our hills with dreadful things.

THE EVIL KETTLE

MRS. WATT: Who, child? Who? What ever is come over you?

JAMES WATT: He. He.

MRS. WATT: Where?

JAMES WATT: He is gone now.

MRS. WATT: Come to bed, Jimmy. Come and lie down.

JAMES WATT: He shan't spoil our hills.

MRS. WATT: Come along. Come and lie down now.

JAMES WATT: He shan't spoil our lovely hills.

MRS. WATT: No, no. No one will hurt the hills. That's right, lie down now. I'll look after the hills.

[She takes his jacket off.]

JAMES WATT: I won't invent it. I won't.

MRS. WATT: No, and you shan't. Now your boots.

[She takes his boots off.]

JAMES WATT: I'll never invent it.

MRS. WATT: No, of course you won't, dearie. Now you lie there while I get you something nice. (*He sits up.*) Now lie still, dearie. Lie still. Do as mother says.

JAMES WATT: But, Mother, I want to lock the door for fear he comes again.

MRS. WATT: Lie still, Jimmy.

JAMES WATT: But, Mother, I must lock the door.

THE EVIL KETTLE

MRS. WATT: I'll lock the door. No one shall come.

[She locks the door. He lies down. She goes to cupboard. She takes out a bundle of weeds and selects three different varieties, three or four of each. She puts them together in a bunch and wrings the juice out of the stalks into a saucer. She pours the saucer into a cup and fills it with milk. JAMES WATT all the while is stirring restlessly. She gives him the cup to drink and pulls the blind down and sits beside his bed.]

There is now no light in the room but the red light of the fire, and it turns the steam from the kettle into a dull red glow.

JAMES WATT: You locked the door, Mother? You did lock the door?

MRS. WATT: Yes, dear, the door's locked. Go to sleep. Nobody shall disturb you.

[JAMES WATT is soothed and lays his head down.]

JAMES WATT (*quietly*): They shan't take our hills.

MRS. WATT: No, no, dearie. Go to sleep now.

[He lies quiet. Re-enter SATAN through the solid middle of the locked door.]

JAMES WATT: Mother! Mother! He's come again. He's come again! Don't you see him? He's after our hills, Mother!

THE EVIL KETTLE

MRS. WATT: No one can come, child. I've locked the door. Go to sleep. Go to sleep.

JAMES WATT: He's squatting before the fire, Mother.

[SATAN *has crossed the room and squatted down by the fire in front of the kettle.*

MRS. WATT: No, no Jimmy. Go to sleep. It's only the steam from the kettle. I'm here; no one shall hurt you.

[JAMES WATT *is silent but stares at SATAN.*

SATAN: O dear kettle. Evil kettle. Beloved evil kettle. Most dear, most evil kettle. Speak to him again, dear evil kettle. (*The kettle puffs out steam into SATAN's face; its lid lifts up and down.*) Yes, speak to him again. He has my work to do. Speak to him. Speak to him. We shall conquer the world, dear kettle, you and I. You are cold, poor kettle, poor evil kettle. But see; you shall be warm as never before. (*He puts his hand into the fire just underneath the kettle. Steam rushes from its spout, the lid shakes.*) There, poor evil kettle, you are warm now. You are warm now, dear kettle.

[*He pats the kettle. Steam bursts up from under the devil's hand where he touches it.*

JAMES WATT: I won't. I won't. I won't invent it. I won't spoil our hills.

THE EVIL KETTLE

MRS. WATT: Invent what, child? Nothing can spoil our hills. Nothing can spoil them. Invent what?

JAMES WATT: Never mind what, mother. It shall never be told. I'll never do it, mother.

SATAN: Speak to him once again, beloved evil kettle. (*The kettle puffs out steam.*) Speak to him, evil kettle.

[He goes over to the window and raises a corner of the blind and calls up black factory smoke outside with his left hand. He smiles, and waves it away with his right hand with the same motion as before.]

JAMES WATT: He wants to spoil our hills.

MRS. WATT: Go to sleep now, dearie, go to sleep. There's a good little boy. The herbs will do you a world of good if only you'll go to sleep.

JAMES WATT: But he'll spoil our hills if I don't watch him. (*SATAN approaches the bed. He stretches out his right hand. He begins to move it before JAMES WATT's face as if rubbing out a slate.* Mother! He's trying to make me forget! I won't forget. I won't forget. I'll remember. Mother! Help me, Mother. Mother! Never let me go near the kettle, Mother. Don't let me talk of the kettle. It's steam, Mother. Steam and the devil will spoil our hills.

THE EVIL KETTLE

O Mother, don't let me, don't let me.
Tell me never to invent anything with
steam. (*He grips her arm.*) Promise me,
Mother! Promise.

MRS. WATT: Yes, yes dear, I promise.

JAMES WATT: Never with steam, Mother. I *won't*
forget. They shan't spoil my hills.
I . . . O, Mother.

MRS. WATT: Yes, dearie.

JAMES WATT: I'm sleepy, Mother.

[*SATAN tiptoes out. JAMES WATT
sleeps. For a while MRS. WATT sits
quietly by the bed. Then she looks
attentively at the boy's sleeping face
and is satisfied.*

MRS. WATT: Ah, it's those good herbs.

[*She draws up the blind, revealing the
cheerful hills and goes on preparing the
table for tea. She makes the tea and
puts it on the table. Presently JAMES
WATT awakes.*

JAMES WATT: Hullo, Mother. What am I doing
here?

MRS. WATT: You was took over queer, Jimmy.
Are you all right now?

JAMES WATT: Yes Mother, I'm all right now. What
was the matter with me?

THE EVIL KETTLE

MRS. WATT: Took over queer you was. But I gave you those good herbs what I got from the hills, and they cured you, thank God. That's what He puts them on the hills for, Jimmy, among all the other flowers. They cures folk wonderful.

JAMES WATT: I'm all right now, Mother.

MRS. WATT: Could you fancy a cup of tea?

JAMES WATT: Yes, Mother. Proper, I could. (*He gets up and comes to the table. The kettle spouts noisily. JAMES WATT sits down. The kettle splutters louder. JAMES WATT takes up his cup of tea.*) Thank you, Mother.

[The kettle makes a still noisier outburst. WATT looks round. He rises and goes over to look at the kettle. He sits in the chair before the fire and looks at it. The kettle steams and the lid lifts. JAMES WATT gazes at it.]

MRS. WATT: Come away from that kettle, Jimmy.

JAMES WATT: The kettle can't hurt me, Mother.

MRS. WATT: Come away from the kettle.

JAMES WATT: But I want to watch it, Mother. I want to watch the lid lifting.

MRS. WATT: Jimmy. When you was ill you made me promise you something.

THE EVIL KETTLE

JAMES WATT: Did I, Mother. What was it?

MRS. WATT: Not to let you go near the kettle, Jimmy, nor to let you talk of steam. There didn't seem any sense in it; but there, I gave you my promise.

JAMES WATT: Did I, Mother? But Mother, I've been thinking while I was watching the lid lifting. I've been thinking that, if steam can do that, it might move a rod, mightn't it? And the rod might move a wheel.

MRS. WATT: Move a wheel, child? That's what you said before.

JAMES WATT: Yes, Mother. And if we could set wheels moving we could do all the work men have to do without ever . . .

MRS. WATT: Now come away, Jimmy, and stop thinking that nonsense. You made me promise, you know; and it didn't do you no good last time. You was took queer like. (JAMES WATT *still gazes at the kettle.*) Go and look at the hills, Jimmy, there's a good boy. There's good in the hills. (*He goes.*) That's right, Jimmy. There's enough good in the hills to keep a body right whatever trouble of mind he had. Go now and look at the hills. When you was quite a little boy, I used to leave you where you could look at them, and I'd go and get on with my work. I

THE EVIL KETTLE

knew no harm could come to you from the hills.

[JAMES WATT *stops half-way, pondering.*

JAMES WATT: Yes, Mother, they're wonderful; but Mother, I can't have made you promise not to let me talk of steam, I've thought of such a great invention with steam, Mother.

MRS. WATT: You made me promise and I promised you, Jimmy.

JAMES WATT: I can't have known what I was saying.

MRS. WATT: Well, anyway keep away from the kettle, Jimmy. If I can't stop you talking I promised you that. (*The kettle spouts away.*) I don't like the looks of the kettle neither, now I come to notice. He seems to . . . it seems . . . but that's all nonsense. But any way, keep away from it, same as I promised you. Look at the lovely hills, Jimmy.

JAMES WATT: But Mother, I want to think. It's such a wonderful scheme I've thought of, Mother. It's to make steam do all the work that men have to do. The whole day's work, Mother, would be done in an hour, and everyone would be free all the rest of the day.

MRS. WATT: Well, dearie, if you must have steam, get it from the plough horses when they're hot. Good honest beasts. But leave the kettle alone.

THE EVIL KETTLE

JAMES WATT: But Mother, the kind of steam I want must come from kettles.

MRS. WATT (*giving way*): Oh, well. After all, bless the boy, what harm can he ever do with a cup of tea?

[*She looks at the hills. The sun sets.*

JAMES WATT *sits gazing at the kettle.*
The hills darken. The fire glows
And the kettle appears more evil.

CURTAIN

THE AMUSEMENTS OF KHAN
KHARUDA

THE AMUSEMENTS OF KHAN KHARUDA

A room set for expensive supper, in a hotel that is not too particular.

Plenty of champagne.

A discreet WAITER.

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Kharuda's late.

2ND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Some blighters must have been worshipping him.

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Worshipping Kharuda?

2ND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: They *do* worship him, you know.

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Silly blighters.

2ND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: They do in his own country.

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Some sort of a damned god, is he?

2ND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Well, *they* think so.

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN (*who has become very slightly drunk*): Well, all I can say is—in that case—we shouldn't have started without him.

2ND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Oh he meant us to all right. Cunning devil, Kharuda. If he wanted to start fair he'd have been here when the flag fell. You'll find he'll still be sober when we're, well, a bit ahead of him.

AMUSEMENTS OF KHAN KHARUDA

CISSIE: Here. I won't have Kharuda talked of like that. He's a dear.

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Here. I say. . . .

CISSIE: What's up?

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Well, what about me? Aren't *I* a dear?

CISSIE: Yes, Captain, of course you are.

[Enter the KHAN KHARUDA.]

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Ah, here he is.

2ND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Here you are, old boy.

KHARUDA: Ah! Good evening all. Jolly good evening. (*He kisses YVONNE and tries to kiss BESSIE.*) Oh, come on.

BESSIE: No, I don't let anyone kiss me that hasn't been introduced. I make it a rule.

KHARUDA: I say, Dick——

[He makes a sign to 2ND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN with his hand, meaning "Come on: do the trick."]

2ND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: His Highness the Khan Kharuda, er—Bessie.

[KHARUDA kisses BESSIE.]

BESSIE: It's a rule I always make. You don't mind?

[KHARUDA is now seated facing audience across the table with YVONNE on his right and BESSIE on his left, and next to BESSIE, 2ND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN and next to him, CISSIE, and then 1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN.]

AMUSEMENTS OF KHAN KHARUDA

KHARUDA: I don't mind your rule now that I'm introduced. But you won't make any more rules? What?

BESSIE: No, that's the only rule I make. But I think one ought to stick to one's rules; don't you?

KHARUDA: Oh, yes. Of course.

BESSIE: I had to make it because I was getting so popular. And you know I don't *like* being too popular.

KHARUDA: No, no, of course not.

[YVONNE, a dark beauty, fixes her eyes on him under langorous lids.
KHARUDA is drawn towards her.

KHARUDA (*in a lower voice*): You been here long, Yvonne?

[YVONNE *nods*.

KHARUDA: So sorry.

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN (*who has been talking with CISSIE*): I lay ten to *one* he won't win. I lay ten to one.

CISSIE: Don't be silly, Captain.

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: I lay ten to one.

CISSIE: I say he's got quite a good chance. Quite all right.

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: I lay ten to one.

KHARUDA: I take you.

AMUSEMENTS OF KHAN KHARUDA

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: That's right, that's right.
When I make a drunken bet I do like
to find someone sporting enough to. . .

CISSIE: *You* aren't drunk, duckie. Not what I call
really tight, that is. Is he now? Is the
Captain drunk?

2ND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN and KHARUDA: No, no. He's
all right.

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: I say I'm drunk: and I
ought to know. And when I make a
drunken bet I say it's very sporting of
old joss-god there to take it. That's
what I said.

CISSIE: Oh, you aren't drunk.

2ND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: No, no, of course not.

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: I say I'm drunk. And I
ought to know—numbers I've seen—in
all parts of the world.

CISSIE: You're *quite* all right.

KHARUDA: What are we betting in?

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Whatever you like, old boy.

KHARUDA: No, no; you say.

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Whatever you like.

KHARUDA: No, you.

CISSIE: It makes no difference to joss-god. You'd
better say.

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Oh well, tenners then.

KHARUDA: And what are we betting *on*?

AMUSEMENTS OF KHAN KHARUDA

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: What *on*?

BESSIE (*to* 2ND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN): Oh Lord! That's a rummy bet. Doesn't know what horse he's backing.

2ND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Oh, it's all one to joss-god. Some poor blighter grubbing at a cotton-crop will have to pay it in tribute if he loses, I suppose. Eh Kharuda?

KHARUDA: Oh yes. I suppose so.

CISSIE (*to* 1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN): He didn't hear you say Polymeela.

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Oh yes, Polymeela. I lay ten to one.

KHARUDA: Ten to one against Polymeela?

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Yes, *he's* no good.

KHARUDA (*drinking*): Then here's to Polymeela.

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN (*drinking too*): Polymeela.

CISSIE: Why do you drink to him if he's no good?

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: 'Cause we're *all* no good.

[KHARUDA *laughs*. CISSIE *cries*.

CISSIE: Oh Captain. Don't say such things, duckie.

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Sorry, Cissie, sorry. I can't help telling the truth sometimes when I'm drunk.

CISSIE: You're not drunk, not what I really call. And you said a *horrid* thing.

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Well, isn't it true?

CISSIE: That's no excuse.

AMUSEMENTS OF KHAN KHARUDA

2ND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Cheer up, Cissie. He didn't mean it. You didn't mean it, did you?

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: What does it matter, when I'm drunk? I wouldn't have meant it if I'd been sober. I mean I'd have meant it but I wouldn't have said it. Well, anyway, that's what I mean, but it doesn't sound sense somehow.

CISSIE: Oh well: let's cheer up. What about another glass?

[She fills his and hers, pouring all the way between the two.]

2ND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Look out, Cissie. You're spilling it.

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN (*pointing to table-cloth—then to his head*): Better there than here.

CISSIE: Oh, will you *stop*?

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Well, isn't it true?

CISSIE: I tell you that's no excuse. Can't we have a bit of a drink without you wanting to make us cry.

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Well, it was true.

CISSIE: Well, the others don't talk like that. And they're having their drink, aren't they?

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN (*looking*): Yes . . . yes. They are. I say, Kharuda, hasn't your religion got some law or other against champagne?

AMUSEMENTS OF KHAN KHARUDA

KHARUDA: Yes, Dick old boy. But then, you see, its laws are *my* laws. I can change *them*, but they can't touch *me*. See?

[*All laugh except KHARUDA.*

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Pretty bon for you. What?

KHARUDA (*enigmatically*): Perhaps.

2ND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: You know, that's the sort of religion that would suit me.

[*Laughter. Amidst the laughter the door opens very very slowly under a timid hand.*

[*The WAITER, who has hitherto hovered silently about the table or stood discreetly out of the way, moves swiftly but still silently to the door. His silence and his swiftness save the company from being aware of the intrusion, as he intercepts a native of Asia in the doorway. A palm conceals the native from those at the table.*

THE NATIVE: Master, I would speak with the Khan Kharuda.

WAITER: He is not here.

NATIVE (*pressing tips of fingers of both hands to his forehead*): Master, I *know* that he is here.

WAITER: No, no, he is not here. You must go away.

[*NATIVE puts hand inside his robes and fumbles.*

AMUSEMENTS OF KHAN KHARUDA

NATIVE: I saved this in forty years.

[*Hands money. WAITER takes it.*]

WAITER: Wait a minute. (*He goes to KHARUDA.*)
A gentleman with an urgent message,
your Highness; I understood—from
the Foreign Office. Shall I show him
in?

KHARUDA: Show him.

2ND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: I say, Kharuda, that would
be just the sort of religion for me.

[*Laughter. The NATIVE advances
timidly and humbly. KHARUDA looks
up at him out of the noise of the others'
laughter.*]

NATIVE: Sacred Master.

KHARUDA: Well?

NATIVE: My family die.

KHARUDA: You came to me because of that?

NATIVE: Yes, Sacred Master. It is the black sick-
ness.

KHARUDA (*leans forward, fixing the NATIVE's eyes
with his almost terribly*): Shahmeen Ab-
dullah, they shall live.

NATIVE: All, Sacred Master?

KHARUDA (*catches his breath almost in fear, then*): All.

NATIVE: Sacred Master, I am poor. I can offer
you no sacrifice. . . .

AMUSEMENTS OF KHAN KHARUDA

KHARUDA (*waves him away*): Remember me when you go to Nasilullah, in autumn, ten years hence.

[*The NATIVE goes away backwards before the wave of that hand as though compelled by it.*

Among the diners brief wonder has taken the place of laughter. The WAITER brings back the Occident by closing the door in his best manner. Laughter breaks out from all the diners except KHARUDA.

2ND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Kharuda, old boy, you're a wonder.

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: You shouldn't have bluffed the poor blighter like that. But it was fine bluff.

CISSIE: Bluff! I never saw any bluff like it.

BESSIE: Best I ever saw. Lord! What'd you be like at poker?

[*YVONNE, the dark beauty, is leaning back laughing inaudibly.*

2ND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: You old humbug.

KHARUDA (*glancing from face to face*): My friends. Laugh at all the follies that I share with you. But this—this is different. It is no affair of yours.

2ND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: The mysterious East, old boy. You can't come the mysterious East over us.

AMUSEMENTS OF KHAN KHARUDA

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Just as much mystery in one postal district of London as there is in the whole of your East. Just as much. Only in the East there's—more—bluff.

KHARUDA: Leave the East alone, Charlie. You're only concerned with the follies I share with you.

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN (*repeating himself*): . . . more bluff.

BESSIE: Lord! If he played poker.

2ND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: You're an old humbug, Kharuda. Don't be annoyed! I like you the better for it.

KHARUDA (*angrily*): Speak of the things you know.

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Seen a good deal of the world, Dick and I. Should know a good many things.

2ND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Well, what do you want us to talk of? What do we know?

KHARUDA: Champagne. Bad hotels. . . .

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Damned *good* hotel.

KHARUDA: Horses, a very little. Jockeys. And what you *think* you know—women.

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: *Think* we know. I *say*, Cissie.

CISSIE: Oh, he's being funny.

2ND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: I say. *Think* we know. You're an old humbug. And you're trying to bluff *us*.

AMUSEMENTS OF KHAN KHARUDA

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: I say, Kharuda; no more mysterious East, please.

2ND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Because it doesn't go down.

[KHARUDA *rises*.

BESSIE: Now don't get angry, old dear.

[*But YVONNE is frightened.*

KHARUDA: Do you think, because I share your foolish pleasures, that I am even as you? Am I to be lonely because I am incarnate? Did I choose you because I deemed you my equals? No, but because between me and men is a gulf so great that, if I cross it, it matters not where! You are only as remote from my spirit as any others.

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Oh, we'll *do* all right. We'll *do*.

BESSIE (*with sudden spite*): Aren't we good enough for you, do you mean?

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: There's not enough mystery in the whole of the East to supply one postal district of London.

[*The WAITER, whose job it is to watch, has felt something that frightens him before any of the others except YVONNE, who, having the most sympathy with KHARUDA, has sensed a danger in him soonest of all.*

AMUSEMENTS OF KHAN KHARUDA

KHARUDA: You shall see.

[He lifts his arm and opens his hand and brings it down towards the table. As the arm descends thunder rolls. This happens three times, darkness coming up rapidly; with the third—black out. Flashes, and a dim light only on KHARUDA'S head, which is a blue Japanese demon-mask, with ferocious, bristling moustache; yet it is clear that he has not moved, but has merely changed. He points at each one in turn, going left-handed. BESSIE first, then 2ND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN, then CISSIE, and so on.]

KHARUDA: Mule! Camel! Dog! Pig! Fawn!

[Light on their faces shows the change one by one.]

BESSIE sits there with a mule's head, the 2ND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN has a camel's head, CISSIE a dog's head, the 1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN a pig's head, and YVONNE the head of a fawn.

The portrayal of their feelings on such an occasion is best left to the actors. The lights in the room come back slowly, one by one.

The WAITER has taken a bottle from its concealment among his clothes and pushed it away, overtaken by sudden honesty and a still greater distrust of wine.

AMUSEMENTS OF KHAN KHARUDA

KHARUDA (*still standing, with his demon's face*): It is enough.

[*He raises his arm slowly upwards as he had moved it slowly downwards. Thunder follows it and darkness as before. And then the thunder ripples away fainter and fainter as though going back to remote hills. Light, and the faces all human again.*]

KHARUDA: Waiter. A jolly old drink, please.

[*The WAITER brings the bottle he had abstracted and pours with a trembling hand in the silence.*]

BESSIE: I, I think I'll have one too.

[*The WAITER helps her and passes on to the others.*]

2ND MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: I say, Charlie; really after this bottle we oughtn't to have any more champagne. Eh?

1ST MAN-ABOUT-TOWN: Well, no. Not after this one.

[*Both drink.*]

CURTAIN





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